

Routledge Grammars

BASIC CANTONESE

A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK



Virginia Yip
and Stephen Matthews

BASIC CANTONESE

BASIC CANTONESE: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

Basic Cantonese introduces the essentials of Cantonese grammar in a straightforward and systematic way. Each of the 28 units deals with a grammatical topic and provides associated exercises, designed to put grammar into a communicative context. Special attention is paid to topics which differ from English and European language structures.

Features include:

- clear, accessible format
- lively examples to illustrate each grammar point
- informative keys to all exercises
- glossary of grammatical terms

Basic Cantonese is ideal for students new to the language. Together with its sister volume, *Intermediate Cantonese*, it forms a structured course of the essentials of Cantonese grammar.

Virginia Yip is Associate Professor at the Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong. **Stephen Matthews** lectures in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong. They are the authors of *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* (1994).

Titles of related interest published by Routledge:

Basic Chinese: A Grammar and Workbook

By Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

Intermediate Chinese: A Grammar and Workbook

By Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

Chinese: An Essential Grammar

By Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

Colloquial Chinese

By Qian Kan

Colloquial Chinese (Reprint of the first edition)

By Ping-Cheng T'ung and David E. Pollard

Colloquial Chinese CD Rom

By Qian Kan

Colloquial Cantonese

By Gregory James and Keith S. T. Tong

Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar

By Stephen Matthews and Virginia Yip

BASIC CANTONESE: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews



London and New York

First published 2000 by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2000 Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews

Typeset in Times by The Florence Group, Stoodleigh, Devon.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by St Edmundsbury Press,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Yip, Virginia, 1962–

Basic cantonese : a grammar and workbook / Virginia Yip and Stephen Matthews.

p. cm. – (Routledge grammars)

Includes index.

1. Cantonese dialects–Grammar. I. Matthews, Stephen, 1963–

II. Title. III. Series.

PL1733.Y56 1999
495.1'7–dc21 99–22788
CIP

ISBN 0-415-19384-2 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-19385-0 (pbk)

*For Timothy and Sophie,
fountains of creativity and inspiration*

CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
1 Consonants	1
2 Vowels and diphthongs	7
3 Tone	11
4 Pronouns	17
5 Possession: ge	23
6 Possession and existence: yáuh	27
7 Being: hàih	32
8 Noun classifiers	36
9 Adjectives	42
10 Adverbs of manner	47
11 Adverbs of time, frequency and duration	52
12 Comparison: gwo and dī	58
13 Prepositions: space and time	65
14 Negation	72
15 Verbs of motion: heui and lāih	78

16	Verbs of giving: béi	83
17	Verbs and particles	88
18	Actions and events: jó and gwo	93
19	Activities: gán and jyuh	99
20	Auxiliary verbs	104
21	Passives	110
22	Word order and topicalization	115
23	Yes/no questions	120
24	Wh-questions	125
25	Sentence particles	130
26	Imperatives	135
27	Requests and thanks	140
28	Numbers, dates and times	145
	Key to exercises	151
	Glossary of grammatical terms	167

INTRODUCTION

This book is for learners of Cantonese who aim to take their knowledge of the language beyond the phrase-book level. While our *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* was designed as a reference book, *Basic Cantonese* is more pedagogical in orientation. It highlights the key building blocks of sentence structure, leaving details of grammar and usage for the more advanced learner. It also provides practice for the grammar points of each unit in the form of communicatively oriented exercises.

The book is self-contained in the sense that it can be used on its own for self-paced learning. With the grammar points presented in approximate order of difficulty, it should also be useful for practice, revision and reference. It can be used in conjunction with a language course or lessons from a tutor. Either way, it should be understood that to learn a tone language such as Cantonese effectively requires some aural support – ideally from native speakers, or as a second best option from audiovisual materials such as tapes or CD-ROMs.

The Cantonese language

Cantonese is named after the city of Canton (known as Guangzhou in Mandarin), the capital of Guangdong province in southern China. Apart from the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, it is spoken in neighbouring Hong Kong and Macau, and also in Chinese communities overseas where it is often the predominant form of Chinese. Both in southern China and in Singapore and Malaysia, where it is widely spoken, it enjoys considerable prestige due to its association with the prosperous southern provinces as well as with the Cantonese culture of films and popular music ('Canto-pop'). It is also widely heard in cities such as Toronto and Vancouver in Canada, Sydney in Australia, New York and San Francisco in the USA. Cantonese will continue to be spoken widely around the Pacific Rim in the twenty-first century.

Cantonese is generally regarded, even by its own speakers, as a dialect of Chinese. This tends to imply, misleadingly, that it differs from standard Chinese (Mandarin or *Putonghua* 'common speech') largely in pronunciation, with some differences in vocabulary and relatively few in grammar. The grammatical differences are often underestimated, and it is dangerous to assume that the same Chinese grammar (essentially that of Mandarin) can be applied straightforwardly to Cantonese. In fact Cantonese has its own fully-fledged grammatical system, largely independent of Mandarin grammar. Indeed the Chinese 'dialects' vary in grammar,

as they do in other respects, as much as the various Romance languages such as French, Spanish and Italian. Moreover, the dialects of southern China, which include Cantonese and Taiwanese, are especially distinctive and diverse. Naturally, some knowledge of Mandarin can be helpful in learning Cantonese, but one cannot assume that it is simply a matter of learning a new pronunciation for the same language, or a new set of vocabulary to go with the same grammar. Hence to learn Cantonese effectively one needs to pay attention to its grammar.

Cantonese grammar

Readers should be aware that the concept of 'grammar' used here is essentially that of contemporary linguistics, which is descriptive in approach, rather than that of traditional school grammar with its prescriptive concern for what is 'good' or 'correct'. The descriptive approach aims to capture the patterns of language as they are actually used by native speakers, without imposing value judgements on particular grammatical forms. Speakers of Cantonese are often puzzled by the idea of Cantonese, as a 'dialect', having its own grammar. Perhaps the simplest way to demonstrate that it does is to consider examples of 'Cantonese' as spoken by foreign learners, such as the following:

*Ngóh fāan ūkkéi chih di	I'll go home later
*Kéuih móuh heui-jó	He didn't go

These two sentences are unacceptable to a native speaker (the asterisk * marks them as ungrammatical), the first because in Cantonese adverbs of time such as **chih di** meaning 'later' come before the verb, not after as in English, and the second because the suffix **-jó** indicating completion is incompatible with most types of negative sentence. These explanations, simply put, are rules of grammar (the precise details are, of course, more complicated). By grammar, then, we mean the rules or principles governing the structure of sentences.

The kind of grammar to be learnt in mastering Cantonese, however, is not like that of Latin or Spanish where the forms of words – noun declensions, verb conjugations and the like – call for study. Instead, the more important questions are those of syntax: the order and patterns in which words are put together to form sentences. Sometimes Cantonese syntax resembles English:

leng saam	pretty clothes
tsai loi	too long
gwa héi	hang up
ngóh sīk kéuih	I know him

In other cases, the order of words is markedly different. In some of these features, Cantonese differs from English as well as from Mandarin – the construction with *hěi* ‘to give’ being a well-known example:

Ngóh bái chái léih
(*lit.* I give money you)
I give you money

Where the syntax is likely to cause difficulty in following the examples, as in this case, we give a literal word-by-word gloss reflecting the Cantonese word order as well as the natural, idiomatic English translation. As a general principle we have aimed to do this where the English translation diverges substantially from the Cantonese original, as in the case of questions and ‘topicalized’ sentences:

Léih sikh mátyéh a?
(*lit.* you eat what)
What are you eating?

Tihmbún ngóh sikh sikh lá
(*lit.* dessert I not eat)
I don’t eat dessert

The glosses, within parentheses preceded by *lit.*, are generally omitted once a pattern has been established.

Chinese writing and romanization

The relationship of spoken Cantonese to Chinese writing is complicated. The Chinese writing system is based on Mandarin, the spoken language of Beijing and northern China. Although Cantonese can be written as it is spoken – with some difficulty, since many Cantonese words lack established characters – written Cantonese of this kind is hardly used for serious purposes, being largely confined to popular magazines and newspaper columns. For serious writing, standard Chinese is used instead. This standard written Chinese can then be read aloud with Cantonese ‘readings’ (pronunciations) for each character, which are taught in schools in Hong Kong and Macau, enabling educated Cantonese speakers to be literate in standard Chinese while speaking only Cantonese.

For most western learners wishing to learn to read or write Chinese, however, it will be useful to do so in conjunction with spoken Mandarin, rather than Cantonese alone. For these reasons, we have not included characters, but use the Yale romanization system (with the minor modifications introduced in our *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar*). This

system has proved effective for learners and is used in most language courses, textbooks, dictionaries and glossaries. The main disadvantage of the Yale system is that most native speakers are unfamiliar with it, and therefore find it quite difficult to read: it should be considered merely as an aid to learning the spoken language.

Pronunciation

Beyond grammar, one of the main difficulties of Cantonese is posed by its pronunciation, and tones in particular. For this reason, the first three chapters are devoted to establishing and reinforcing the main features of Cantonese pronunciation. Learners who do not have access to native speakers or Cantonese media should be sure to acquire some tapes or other audiovisual materials in order to practise recognition and production of tones.

Exercises

The exercises in this book are intended to be communicatively useful tasks, rather than the mechanical rote practice of some past grammars. The emphasis is placed on expressing ideas and, to give them a more authentic feel, some are situated in a real-life context: ordering dishes in a restaurant, asking for directions, and the like. Because many of the exercises are open-ended, they naturally allow more than one answer: the suggested answers given in the key by no means represent the only options. Learners with access to native speakers may benefit from reading out their own answers to them and eliciting alternatives. More demanding exercises, which may require additional knowledge or reference to other units, are marked with a dagger (†).

Further practice

Few learners will be satisfied with armchair knowledge of the language: to put grammatical knowledge to practical use, exposure to Cantonese media and practice with native speakers will be needed. This book aims to provide a firm foundation on which to build proficiency. Using the minimum of terminology, it should provide just enough grammatical apparatus for the teacher and learner to devise further practice activities of their own. Readers graduating from this book will also be able to progress to *Intermediate Cantonese* which takes them into new and more challenging territory.

UNIT ONE

Consonants

In Cantonese it is useful to distinguish initial consonants, that is those which occur at the beginning of a syllable, from those found at the end of a syllable.

Initial consonants

	<i>Unaspirated</i>	<i>Aspirated</i>	<i>Fricative</i>	<i>Nasal/ liquid</i>
Bilabial	b	p	f	m
Dental/alveolar	d	t	s	n/l
Velar/glottal	g	k	h	ng
Labio-velar	gw	kw		
Alveolar affricates	j	ch		

The consonant sounds in the third and fourth columns – the fricatives **f**, **s**, **h** and the nasals **m**, **n**, **ng** – are pronounced much as in English, while the first two columns pose greater difficulty. Whereas English stops such as **p** and **b** are distinguished by the fact that **p** is voiceless and **b** voiced, no Cantonese stops are distinctively voiced; instead they are distinguished by aspiration – a burst of air emitted in the process of articulation. In English, this feature is also present in that initial **p** is normally aspirated and **b** not; however, this contrast is not a distinctive one. To an English speaker, Cantonese **b** as in *béi* ‘give’ may sound either like **p** (because of the lack of voicing) or like **h** (because of the lack of aspiration). This combination of features – voiceless and unaspirated – is not found in English, making the Cantonese consonants **b/d/g** difficult to recognize and produce at first. Remember that **b-** as in *bāt* ‘pen’, **d-** as in *deui* ‘pair’ and **g-** as in *gwai* ‘expensive’ are not voiced. The problem also arises

in romanized place names: *Kowloon*, for example, is generally pronounced by English speakers with an aspirated [k], but in the Cantonese form *Gáulùhng* the initial consonant is not aspirated.

In the labio-velar consonants *gw* and *kw*, the initial velar consonant is articulated more or less simultaneously with the bilabial [w] as in *gwa* 'hang' and *kwáhn* 'skirt'. There is a tendency to simplify *gw* and *kw* to [g] and [k] respectively before *o* or *u*, e.g. *gwok* 'country' sounds identical to *gok* 'feel'. Similarly:

Gwóngjǎn	→	Góngjǎn	Canton (Guangzhou)
gwó	→	gú	guess
gwun	→	gun	can (of beer, Coke, etc.)
kwóhng	→	kóhng	crazy

The affricates **j** and **ch** are probably the most difficult of the initial consonants. They are distinguished by aspiration: **ch** is accompanied by a breath of air while **j** is not. There are two rather different pronunciations for each consonant, depending on the following vowel:

(i) Before the front vowels *i*, *yu* and *eu* or *eui* they are alveo-palatal, [tʃ] and [tʃʰ] respectively, formed with the tongue touching both the alveolar ridge and the palate:

jí	know	chí	to stick
jyū	pig	chyū	village
jéui	chase	chēui	to blow

In these cases the sounds are fairly close to their English counterparts as in 'June' and 'choosc'.

(ii) In all other cases they are alveolar, [ts] and [tsʰ] respectively, formed at the front of the mouth (like *d* and *t*) at the alveolar ridge just behind the teeth:

jā	to drive	chāh	tea
johng	crash	cho	wrong

These sounds are different from any in English: **chāh** should not be pronounced like 'char'. In all cases remember that the Cantonese **j** is not voiced, just as **đ** is not, while **ch** as in **chín** is aspirated, like *t*.

Consonants and names

The romanized forms of names used in Hong Kong and south China follow various older transcription systems which can be confusing for the learner. To pronounce them correctly, bear in mind the following correspondences:

<i>Place name</i>	<i>Yale romanization</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Yale romanization</i>
Kowloon	Gáulùhng	Kong	Gǒng
Kwun Tong	Gwūn Tòhng	Kwok	Gwok
Tai Po	Daaih Bou	Tang	Dahng
Tsimtsatsui	Jimsájeui	Tse	Jeh
Shatin	Sātihh	Shek	Sehk

Semivowels

The semivowels **w-** and **y-** also occur at the beginning of a syllable. They can be pronounced much as in English:

w-	wah	say	wáih	will
y-	yiu	want	yuhng	use

In the case of initial **y-** followed by the vowel **yu**, technically we would have **yyu**, but this is conventionally written more simply as **yu**, as in **yuht** 'month'.

Nasals

The velar nasal written as **ng-** is a single consonant which presents two problems:

- It is basically the same sound that we find in 'sing' and 'singer', but in Cantonese it can begin a syllable, as in **ngóh** 'I'. It can be produced by pronouncing 'singer' as 'si-nger'.
- Cantonese speakers frequently do not pronounce it where expected. Thus the pronoun 'I' is often heard as **óh**, 'duck' is either **ngaap** or **aap**, while **ngá** 'five' may be pronounced as **áh** instead.

A similar problem arises with the distinction between **n** and **l** which is made in dictionaries and some textbooks. Although certain words nominally

begin with **n**, notably the pronoun **néih** 'you', most speakers pronounce these with **l** instead:

néuih-yán	or	léuih-yán woman
nám	or	lám think
nídouh	or	lídouh here

Syllabic nasals

The nasal consonants **m** and **ng** occur as syllables in their own right, albeit only in a few words. The most frequently encountered examples are:

m̃h	not (the main negative word; see Unit 14)
ng̃h	five (also pronounced úh ; see above)
Ng̃h	Ng (a common surname)

Note that these words each carry a tone of their own.

Final consonants

Only two kinds of consonants occur at the end of a syllable:

- the stops **-p**, **-t**, **-k**: these stops are unreleased, i.e. the airstream is closed to make them, but not reopened again, so that no air is released. Such consonants occur in casual pronunciation in English (e.g. 'yep!') as well as in German and many other languages, and are not difficult to produce. What is more difficult is to hear the difference between them, as they tend to sound alike:

baat (eight) vs. (**yáat**) **baak** ((one) hundred)
sáap chē (wet car) vs. **sāt chē** (missing car) vs. **sák chē** (traffic jam)

- the nasals **-m**, **-n**, **-ng**: these are easily pronounced, although Mandarin speakers may have difficulty with **-m**.

sāam (three) vs. **sām** (to close) vs. **sāang** (alive)
làahm (south) vs. **làahn** (difficult) vs. **lāahng** (cold)

One complication here is that many speakers pronounce the **-ng** words with **-n** in certain syllables, so that **bohksūang** 'student', for example, is pronounced **bohksūan**.

Exercise 1.1

Pronounce the following words paying special attention to the consonants. You may need to look at Unit 2 (vowels) and Unit 3 (tone) in order to pronounce the words correctly. If possible check your pronunciation with a native speaker.

- 1 **baat** eight
- 2 **taap** tower
- 3 **je** lend/borrow
- 4 **ngoh** hungry
- 5 **ngāam** exactly
- 6 **luhk** six
- 7 **seun** letter
- 8 **cheung** sing
- 9 **ngh** five
- 10 **yaht** day

Exercise 1.2

The following words are 'minimal pairs' differing in only one feature. Identify this difference and make sure that your pronunciation distinguishes the two words.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 bin change | pīn a slice |
| 2 baai worship | paai distribute |
| 3 dai bring | taai too (excessively) |
| 4 dīn mad | tīn sky |
| 5 jēui chase | chēui blow |
| 6 jēun bottle | chēun spring |
| 7 gok feel | kok accurate |
| 8 gau enough | kan deduct |
| 9 gwan stick | kwan difficult |
| 10 jēung sheet (of paper) | chēung window |

† Exercise 1.3

The following surnames (1–6) and place names (7–12) are written in obsolete romanization systems. Pronounce them and write them in Yale romanization.

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 Cheung | 7 Tai O |
| 2 Chiu | 8 Lai Chi Kok |

3 Kwan
4 Ting
5 Shum
6 Chung

9 Tseung Kwan O
10 Shauckiwan
11 Tai Kok Tsui
12 Sham Shui Po

UNIT TWO

Vowels and diphthongs

The vowels written **a**, **aa**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**, **eu** and **yu** are all single vowels which should be pronounced with consistent quality throughout: for example, Cantonese **so** should not sound like 'so' in English, but more like 'saw'. The first six are comparable to English vowels, while the last two are not, being closer to French:

a	bāt pen	similar to the vowel in 'but'
aa	sāam three	similar to the vowel in 'father'
i	sī silk	similar to the vowel in 'see'
e	leng pretty	similar to the vowel in 'pet'
o	dō many	similar to the vowel in 'paw'
u	fu trousers	similar to the vowel in 'fool'
yu	syū book	similar to the vowel in French 'tu'
eu	seun letter	similar to the first vowel in French 'Peugeot'

Long and short a

A peculiarity of Cantonese not shared with most other varieties of Chinese is the distinction between short **a** and long **aa**. The following minimal pairs differ in the length of the vowel:

sām	heart	sāam	three
mahn	ask	maahn	slow
hāhng	permanent	hāahng	walk
kāt	cough	kāat	card

These vowels differ in sound quality as well as length: **sām** sounds much like English 'sun', while **sāam** has an open vowel more like that of 'sample' in (southern British) English. When **a** comes at the end of a syllable as in **fa** 'flower' it is written with a single **a** but pronounced as in 'fa-ther'.

Front rounded vowels

The digraphs **yu** and **eu** represent single vowels produced at the front of the mouth with rounded lips; counterparts to these are not generally used in English, but exist in several European languages:

yu is similar to French 'u' and German 'ü'. In English something like it appears in the second syllable of 'issue'.

eu is similar to French 'eu' as in the second syllable in 'hors d'oeuvre'. English speakers may try pronouncing 'her' with rounded lips (as if pouting).

Variable vowels

The sound of a vowel can be affected by a following consonant. In particular, high vowels become more open before the velar consonants **-k** and **-ng**:

- 1 The vowel in **síhk** 'eat' lies between **i** and **e**, but is still distinct from **sehk** 'stone'. Similarly, **gīng** 'pass by' can be difficult to distinguish from **gēng** 'be afraid'. In a few words usage varies between **i** and **e**, for example, **síhng** or **sēhng** 'whole'.
- 2 The vowel in **húhk** 'green' lies between **u** and **o**, but is still distinct from **lohk** 'go down'. Similarly, **tùhng** 'with' can be difficult to distinguish from **tòhng** 'sugar'.
- 3 The rounded vowel **eu** before the velar consonants **k** and **ng** as in **jeuk** 'wear' and **cheung** 'sing' is more open than that in **chēut** 'go out', **jéun** 'bottle', **seun** 'letter', and so on.

Diphthongs

These combinations of two vowel sounds are produced by shifting from one vowel to another over the course of one syllable:

lu	giu	call(ed)	as in English 'few'
oi	choi	vegetable	as in English 'boy'
ou	dou	arrive	as in English 'hold'
ei	sei	four	as in English 'say'
ui	guih	tired	as in English 'goo-ey' (but pronounced as only one syllable)
eui	seui	tax	(the front rounded vowel eu followed by the glide i)

Note that there are diphthongs corresponding to both short **a** and long **aa**.

ai	sāi	west	ai	sāi	to waste
	māih	rice		māih	to buy
au	gaa	enough	au	gaa	to teach
	laah	leak		laah	to scold

The long diphthongs are close to those in English: **ai** is similar to that in 'sky', **au** to that in 'how'.

Exercise 2.1

Pronounce the following minimal pairs (refer to Unit 3 for the tones, which are the same for each pair):

1	gān	follow	gān	(classifier for house)
2	fān	separate	fān	back, return
3	sān	new	sān	mountain
4	gām	gold	gām	prison
5	lām	think	lām	hug, embrace
6	gām	dare	gām	deduct, reduce (prices)
7	lāhm	to water	lāhm	blue
8	gāi	chicken	gāi	street
9	lāih	polite	lāih	milk
10	chāu	autumn	chāu	copy
11	līng	shiny	lēng	pretty
12	pīhng	flat	pēhng	cheap
13	līk	take, pick	lēk	clever, smart
14	sīhk	eat	sehk	stone
15	gīng	pass	gēng	fear
16	mōhk	curtain, screen	muhk	wood
17	sōng	lose, die	sung	send
18	lohk	happy	luhk	green
19	dōhk	measure	duhk	read
20	mōhng	to stare	muhng	dream

Exercise 2.2

Pronounce the following words, paying special attention to the rounded vowels **yu** and **eu** (if possible check your pronunciation with a native speaker or against a recording):

1	syut	snow	11	yuhbeih	prepare
2	hyut	blood	12	kyutdihng	decide
3	hēung	fragrant	13	yuhthéng	mooncake
4	kèuhng	strong	14	leuhnjeuhn	clumsy
5	yuhn yi	willing	15	mānhtéuhn	contradiction
6	chyun	to spell/an inch			
7	lyuhn	chaotic, messy			
8	jēun	bottle			
9	jyuh	to live			
10	dyún	short			

Exercise 2.3

Pronounce the following pairs of words paying special attention to the diphthongs:

A monosyllabic

1	meih	not yet
2	gei	mail
3	yiu	want
4	siu	smile
5	tiu	jump
6	méih	every, each
7	míuh	seconds
8	guíh	tired
9	giu	call
10	wúih	will
11	dóih	bag
12	gói	change
13	gōu	tall
14	lóuh	old
15	tēui	push

B disyllabic

meihdoh	taste
jíngéi	oneself
jiugu	take care
diu-yú	fishing
tiu-móuh	to dance
múihmóih	sister
kéihmíuh	wonderful
hauhfui	regret
giu-ngouh	proud
hóih-wúih	have a meeting
joigin	see you (<i>lit.</i> see again)
yínggói	should
gwónggou	advertisement
díhnlóuh	computer
teui-yáuh	retire

UNIT THREE

Tone

Like other varieties of Chinese and many south-east Asian languages, Cantonese is a tonal language: the relative pitch at which a syllable is pronounced plays a role in distinguishing one word from another. While tone presents one of the biggest obstacles, both real and psychological, to a working command of Cantonese, it also gives a musical quality to the language, and some learners find musical analogies helpful.

The importance of tones

Whereas in other languages deviation in pitch might merely result in a foreign accent, in Cantonese it changes the identity of a word:

High level	Low level	Mid level	Low level
sān new	sahn kidney	gau enough	gauh old, dated
syū book	syuh tree	dim to touch	dihm OK, done
High level	High rising	High rising	Low rising
lāu jacket	láu apartment	ngó goose	ngóh I
yāt bun one half	yāt bún one (book)	chí teeth	chíh resemble

Fortunately a word pronounced with an inaccurate tone can often be recognized from the context, although the errors are sometimes amusing.

How many tones?

To begin with a perennial question: how many tones are there? Linguists of different persuasions debate the issue, and different dialects of Cantonese vary in this respect. Although some reference books distinguish seven, nine or even ten tones, most current analyses assume six in

Hong Kong Cantonese – and for the beginner six tones are plenty. These are shown, with the vowel **a** as an example, in the following table

	Rising	Level	Falling
High	á	ā	ǎ
Mid	á	a	ǎ
Low	ah	ah	ah

The ‘high level’ tone is sometimes pronounced with a noticeable fall (ǎ) as in **sín** ‘first’. Some books and dictionaries attempt to distinguish high level as in **sāan** ‘hill’ from high falling as in **sǎan** ‘to close’, but most speakers make no such systematic distinction and these two words sound identical. Some other textbooks show this tone as ‘falling’ (ǎ) for typographical convenience; we write them with the ‘high level’ diacritic (ā) throughout as this pronunciation seems to be dominant among younger speakers in Hong Kong.

For many beginners, two strategies may be useful in tackling the six tones:

- The three level tones (high, mid and low) are relatively easy to recognize and produce, providing three anchor points. In musical terms, the difference between the high and mid-level tones is about one and a half tones (a minor third), while that between the mid-level and low-level tones is one whole tone.
- It is relatively easy to recognize a tone as being one of the higher or one of the lower three. The ‘h’ marking the three low tones in the Yale romanization system comes in useful here, effectively marking the lower register. To distinguish between the various lower tones, especially between the low level and low falling, is more demanding. The low falling tone as in **lǎih** ‘come’ can often be recognized by a ‘creaky’ voice quality as the pitch reaches the bottom of the speaker’s voice range.

The pronunciations are best learnt from native speakers or recordings, but English intonation patterns approximate some of the tones:

- The high rising tone as in **dim** ‘how?’ resembles a question showing surprise (‘who? really?’);
- The low rising tone as in **ngóh** ‘I’ begins with a slight dip and can be compared to a hesitant ‘well, ...’;
- The low falling tone as in **yáuh** ‘person’ resembles a dismissive intonation, as in a calm but definitive ‘no’.

It may be some consolation to note that speakers of other Chinese dialects, and even some native speakers, have difficulty distinguishing the two rising tones, sometimes confusing phrases such as:

sung séung heui	send some pictures (séung)
sung séuhng heui	send something up (séuhng)
Méihgwok sí	American history
Méihgwok sih	the American market

Tone versus stress and intonation

In English a word such as 'yes' can be pronounced with a variety of intonation patterns:

- falling: yes! (We've done it!)
- dipping: yes, (but ...)
- low level: yes ... (What is it this time?)

In Cantonese the word **haih** 'yes' must be pronounced with a low-level tone regardless of the context, otherwise it will sound like another word. Word stress and intonation patterns as used in English and other European languages often interfere with production of tones. When we stress a word, we automatically give it a high pitch; if this is superimposed on a Cantonese tone, it may turn a low tone into a high level or high falling one, for example:

haih (yes) + emphatic stress → **hái** or **hài** (this is a common error, often committed by the second author, and comes dangerously close to obscenity)

Similarly, questions in English and many other languages end with a rising intonation. If this is added to a Cantonese question it may change the identity of the last word or two. Consequently, the scope for stress and intonation is limited (largely to sentence particles).

Tone change

A 'changed tone' occurs in colloquial speech in certain combinations. The affected syllable is pronounced with a high rising tone instead of the usual low (level or falling) tone. There are several categories including the following.

(i) Nouns at the end of a compound or phrase:

yàhn person	but	léuh-yán woman
yuht month	but	chóh-yút spend a month recovering after giving birth
màhn-hohk literature	but	Ying-mán English (language)
yùh-dáan fish cake	but	tíng yá a/the fish
lauh-tái staircase	but	déng-láu top floor, penthouse
yāt hahp syū a box of books	but	yāt go hāp a box
yāt dihp choh a dish of vegetables	but	yāt jek dip a dish

(ii) Names with the prefix a- or lóuh-:

Chàhn Sāang Mr. Chan	but	A-Chán Chan (colloquial)
Làih Sāang Mr. Lai		Lóuh-Lái old (Mr) Lai

(iii) Reduplicated adjectives, in which the second syllable changes to a high rising tone (see also Unit 9):

sòh foolish	but	sòh-só-déi silly
fèih fat	but	fèih-féi-déi chubby

The rules underlying this alternation are rather too complex to spell out here. Learners will develop a feel for this phenomenon on exposure to colloquial Cantonese.

Exercise 3.1

Practise distinguishing the six tones on the following syllables (meanings given in parentheses indicate that the syllable forms part of a word with that meaning):

1 sī	sí	sí	síh	síh	síh
poem	history	try	time	market	matter
2 fān	fán	fán	fāhn	fāhn	fāhn
split	powder	lie	grave	(excited)	portion
3 sēui	séui	séui	sèuih	séuih	séuih
need	water	tax	suspend	(clue)	(tunnel)
4 yāu	yáu	yau	yāuh	yáuh	yauh
rest	petrol	slender	swim	have	again
5 fū	fú	fú	fūh	fūh	fūh
(husband)	bitter	trousers	support	woman	father

Exercise 3.2

Read out the following sentences which illustrate the same sequence of six tones as in exercise 3.1:

- 1 Dī gú-piu kòhng séuhng lohk (The shares are going up and down (in value) like crazy)
- 2 Ūkkéi gam kùhng móuh yuhng (The household is so poor, it's no use)
- 3 Gām lín gwai mēh máaih jyuh (This year it's expensive, (we) won't buy it yet)
- 4 Sān lāu taai lāuhn máaih manih (New flats are too difficult to buy and sell)
- 5 Bīn gwái go tòhng kéuih jyuh? (Who on earth is living with him?)
- 6 Jīng hóu suai sèhng máahn sikk (After steaming everything, spend the whole evening eating it)

Exercise 3.3

Pronounce the following pairs differing in tone (and occasionally other features such as vowel length):

- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 fóchē | train | fóchē | lorry |
| 2 chísin | crazy | chihsihn | charity |
| 3 lóuh yàhn | old person | louh yàhn | pedestrian |
| 4 gāisih | market | gai sih | count the time |
| 5 sái sǎn | to wash one's
body | sái sah | clean the kidney
(dialysis) |
| 6 lāangsām | sweater | laahn sām | worn-out clothes |
| 7 gúsih | stock market | gusi | story |
| 8 maaih lāu | sell a flat | máaih lāu | buy a jacket |
| 9 gáu dím | 9 o'clock | gáu dīhm | manage to do
something |
| 10 sēung mòhng | casualty | séuhng móhng | get on the Internet |

† Exercise 3.4

Change the tone of the italicized syllable or word to the high-rising changed tone as used in colloquial speech, for example, *sān* new + *māhn* information → *sānmám* news:

- 1 haah behind + *māhn* door → _____ back door
- 2 yàuh oil + *tiuh* strip → _____ Chinese fried doughnut
- 3 bun half + *yeh* late → _____ midnight

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------|---------------------|
| 4 | sīu burn + <i>yeh</i> late | → _____ | late-night meal |
| 5 | Dāk German + <i>màhn</i> language | → _____ | German |
| 6 | tín sky + <i>pàahng</i> scaffolding | → _____ | roof top |
| 7 | sāam jek three-classifier + <i>dihp</i> dish | → _____ | three dishes |
| 8 | On bay + <i>màhn</i> door | → _____ | Macau (place name) |
| 9 | yahp put in + <i>yàuh</i> oil | → _____ | fill up with petrol |
| 10 | fā flower + <i>yùhn</i> garden | → _____ | garden |

UNIT FOUR

Pronouns

The personal pronouns make a good place to begin an initiation into Cantonese grammar, since they are rather straightforward: they do not vary according to gender, case or social status. Nor are there any possessive forms as such, since the pronouns combine with the possessive **ge** to indicate possession (see Unit 5). The plural forms are produced in regular fashion by adding the suffix **-deih** to the corresponding singular forms.

<i>Person</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
first: I, we	ngóh (óh)	ngóhdeih (óhdeih)
second: you	néih (léih)	néihdeih (léihdeih)
third: he/she, they	kéih (héuh)	kéuhdeih (héuhdeih)

Notice that each of the pronoun forms has alternative pronunciations. The forms in brackets are the result of sound changes, and are the object of a certain amount of controversy: courses rarely teach them; teachers may treat them as incorrect, and television advertising campaigns have even sought to outlaw them. Nevertheless in the case of 'you' **léih** has become by far the most common form, with initial **l-** replacing **n-**, while **óh** and **héuh** are also commonly heard.

The suffix **-deih**

One of the few grammatical suffixes in the language, the suffix **-deih** cannot be used to form plural forms of nouns (e.g. we cannot use ***sīnsūang-deih** to mean 'teachers'). Apart from the personal pronouns as shown above, its only uses are:

- (i) In the form **yàhn-deih** which serves as a kind of indefinite pronoun (people, one, etc.):

Yàhndeih tái-jyuh léih	People are watching you
Mhóu chou yàhndeih	Don't disturb (other) people

This form can also be used to refer indirectly to oneself:

A: Léih dīngáai òh chéut sēng ga?	Why don't you say anything?
B: Yàhndeih mhóuyisi a	Maybe I'm embarrassed

- (ii) In contracted forms with names, as in:

Paul kéuihdeih → Paul-deih	Paul and his family/friends
A-Chán kéuihdeih → A-Chán-deih	Chan and his family/company, etc.

Using pronouns

Pronouns are used to refer to individuals, as in introductions:

Ngóh giu Stephen	My name is Stephen
Ngóh haih go hohksāang	I'm a student
Kéuih haih Méihgwokyàhn	He's American
Ngóhdeih haih yàuhhaak	We're tourists

As in many languages (such as Italian, Spanish and Japanese) pronouns can be omitted when they are understood from the context. Some typical examples of such contexts follow:

- A: Heui bīndouh a?**
(lit. go where?)
Where are you going?
- B: Fān ōkkéi**
(lit. return home)
I'm going home
- A: A-Yīng jōuh matyéh gūng ga?**
(lit. Ying does what job?)
What does Ying do for a living?

- B: **Jouh wuhsih ge**
 (lit. does nurse)
 She's a nurse

Note that this also applies to objects, as in the following cases:

- A: **Yám-mh-yám ján a?**
 (lit. drink wine or not?)
 Would you like some wine?
- B: **Mh yám la, ngóh saai**
 (lit. not drink, thanks a lot)
 I won't, thanks
- A: **Nī go sung bái léih ge**
 (lit. this give to you)
 This is for you
- B: **Dōjeh! Ngóh hóu jūngyi a!**
 (lit. thank you! I very much like!)
 Thank you! I like it!

Again, when several statements are made about the same subject, it is usually understood after its first mention. If you are introducing yourself, for example, it is sufficient to use **ngóh** once:

- Ngóh giu Mary, gām lín sahp-haat seui, làih Hēunggóng jouh**
gāuwuhs hohksāng
 (lit. I called Mary, this year eighteen years old, come Hong Kong as exchange student)
- My name is Mary, [I'm] eighteen this year, [I] came to Hong Kong as an exchange student

The third person: he, she and it

The third-person pronoun **kéuih** means 'he' or 'she', without distinction of gender. It is not normally used to refer to inanimate things, and hence there is typically nothing corresponding to the English pronoun *it*, whether as subject or object of the verb. For example, referring to a picture or piece of clothing:

- Hóu leng a! Ngóh yín a!**
 (lit. very nice! I want)
 It's beautiful! I want it!

Again, a sequence of statements can be made about the same topic:

Kéuih máaih-jó ga sán chē hóu gwai ge, hóu chái kéuih tsaitái dōu jūngyi jēk

(lit. he bought a new car, very expensive, fortunately his wife also likes)
He's bought a new car, [it was] very expensive, fortunately his wife likes [it] too

Similarly, there is no counterpart to 'it' referring to the weather, or to nothing in particular:

Gāmyaht hóu yíht a

(lit. today very hot)
It's hot today

Lohk yúh la!

(lit. falls rain)
It's raining!

Hóu làahn góng

(lit. very hard to say)
It's hard to say

Reflexive jīngéi

The reflexive form **jīngéi** is used for all persons: myself, yourself, herself, ourselves, etc. It is used:

(i) Alone, referring back to the subject of the sentence:

Léih yiu súsām jīngu jīngéi

(lit. you should carefully look after yourself)
You should look after yourself carefully

Mhóu sèhngyaht gwaai jīngéi

(lit. don't always blame yourself)
Don't blame yourself all the time

Kéuih deni jīngéi hóu yáuh-seunsām

(lit. he towards himself very confident)
He has confidence in himself

(ii) Reinforcing a pronoun:

Ngóh jìhgéi mǎ wúh gáun jòuh
 (lit. I myself not would so behave)
 I myself would not behave like that

Léih jìhgéi sǎn jī daap-on
 (lit. you self only know answer)
 Only you yourself know the answer

A-Yān sèhngyáht jaan kéuih jìhgéi
 (lit. Yan always praise her self)
 Yan is always praising herself

(iii) As an adverb meaning 'by oneself':

Ngóh jìhgéi mǎaih kung jyú faahn
 (lit. I myself buy groceries cook rice)
 I'll buy the groceries and cook by myself

Léih yínggōi jìhgéi lám chingchó
 (lit. you should yourself think clearly)
 You should think things over by yourself

Kéuih séung jìhgéi jòuh haih-jyúyahm
 (lit. he want self do department chairperson)
 He wants to be the department chairperson himself

Exercise 4.1

Supply the missing pronouns:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 _____ jyuh hái Gáulǎhng | I live in Kowloon |
| 2 Hóu hōisám gin dóu _____ | Glad to see you |
| 3 _____ sǐk _____ | We know them |
| 4 _____ haih go hóu yísāng | You are a nice doctor |
| 5 _____ haih hohksāng | You are students |
| 6 _____ hóu jūngyi yāmgohk | He likes music |
| 7 _____ dá-jó-dihnwá bēi lóuhbáan | I phoned the boss |
| 8 _____ heui-gwo Ommán | They've been to Macau |
| 9 _____ geidāk _____ | She remembered me |
| 10 _____ hóu gwa-jyuh _____ | They missed us very much |

Exercise 4.2

Replace the italicized phrases with pronouns in the following sentences.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 <i>Síu Mihng hóu lengjái</i> | Ming is very handsome |
| 2 Ngóh heui taam <i>ngóh a-máh</i> | I'm going to visit my grandmother |
| 3 Máh yísāng yī-hón-jó <i>gái go behngyáhn</i> | Dr Ma has cured several patients |
| 4 Susan ga-jó <i>John go sailóu</i> | Susan has married John's brother |
| 5 <i>Dī hohksāang ge gāngfo</i> <i>taai dōla</i> | The students' homework is too much |
| 6 <i>Lóuhbāan tūhng go beisyū</i> <i>git-jó-fān</i> | The boss and the secretary got married |
| 7 Ngóh hóu gwa-jyuh <i>go léui</i> | I'm missing my daughter very much |
| 8 Kéuih tái-jó <i>dī tūhngsik ge seun</i> | She read her colleagues' letter(s) |
| 9 Ngóh tūhng <i>ngóh sailóu yāchāih hahpjok</i> | My brother and I collaborate together |
| 10 <i>Léih tūhng go jái hóu chūhyéung</i> | You and your son look like each other |

† Exercise 4.3

Answer the following questions, considering whether a pronoun is needed or not:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Léih jūng-mh-jūngyi Hēunggóng a? | Do you like Hong Kong? |
| 2 Kàhmyaht tīnhei dím a? | How was the weather yesterday? |
| 3 Bīngó hóiyíh bōng ngóh a? | Who can help me? |
| 4 Léih tóuh-mh-tóuh-ngoh a? | Are you hungry? |
| 5 Kéuihdeih jáu-jó meih a? | Have they left? |
| 6 Kéuih je-jó chíu bái bīngó a? | Who did he lend money to? |
| 7 Léih maaih-jó ga chē meih a? | Have you sold the car? |
| 8 Fūk wá leng-mh-leng a? | Is the picture beautiful? |
| 9 Ga che jíng hóu meih a? | Is the car mended? |
| 10 Dī gúpiu yáuh-móuh sīng a? | Have the shares gone up? |

UNIT FIVE

Possession: **ge**

ge is one of the most frequent words in Cantonese, used in several important grammatical patterns. One of its main uses is to indicate possession, as we can illustrate with the pronouns introduced in Unit 4:

ngóh ge	my, mine	ngóhdeih ge	our, ours
léih ge	your, yours	léihdeih ge	your, yours
kéuih ge	his/her, hers	kéuihdeih ge	their, theirs
jíngéi ge	one's own	bīngó ge	whose

As the two translations suggest, these are used in two ways:

1 Before a possessed noun:

Ngóh ge deihjǐ háh nǐdóuh	My address is here
Léih ge Gwóngdūng-wá mǐh cho	Your Cantonese is not bad
Kéuih ge gǐnhhōng mǐhǐh géi hóu	Her health is not too good
Jíngéi ge gǎihhǎng jeui gányiu	One's own family is most important

2 As predicates, usually following the verb **haih** 'be' (see Unit 7):

Nǐ go haih léih ge	This is yours
Dǐ chǐn haih kéuih ge	The money is his
Haih-mǐhǐh ngóh ge?	Is it mine?

The verb **haih** 'be' can also be understood, so that the resulting sentence lacks a verb

Bá jē kéuih ge	This umbrella is hers
Jek māau kéuihdeih ge	The cat is theirs
Nǐ tǐuh sósǐh bīngó ge?	Whose key is this?

Some points to notice:

- The **ge** indicating possession is sometimes omitted, especially where there is a close intrinsic relationship between the possessor and possessed, as in the case of relatives and family members:

kéuih sailóu	her younger brother
ngóh lóuhgūng	my husband (colloquial)
léih gūjē	your aunt (father's younger sister)

These phrases can themselves serve as the possessor of another noun:

Kéuih sailóu ge mahntàih hóu dō
Her (younger) brother's problems are many

Ngóh lóuhgūng ge òkkéi-yàhn làih saai
My husband's family have all come

Léih gūjē ge mahtyihp hóu jìhk-chún
Your aunt's property is worth a lot money

- Before nouns, the appropriate classifier (see Unit 8) is often used in place of **ge**, especially in colloquial language:

ngóh go léui	my daughter
kéuih ga chē	his car
léih gān sāam	your shirt

This has a similar meaning to the corresponding phrase with **ge**, but denotes a particular individual or object. To specify more than one, the plural classifier **di** is used:

ngóh di jáléui	my children
kéuih di sāam	her clothes
Peter di hohksāang	Peter's students

See Unit 8 for more on classifiers.

Exercise 5.1

Express the following by using the possessive marker provided (i.e. classifier, **ge** or **di**):

Example. my book (syū: bún) → **ngóh bún syū**

- 1 your nose (**heih: go**)
- 2 her friends (**páhngyáuh: ge/dí**)
- 3 her eyes (**ngáahn: deui**)
- 4 his desk (**tóit: jéung**)
- 5 my letters (**seun: ge/dí**)
- 6 her handbag (**sáudóit: go**)
- 7 my foot (**geuk: jek**)
- 8 Hong Kong's weather (**tinbei: ge**)
- 9 today's news (**sáumán: ge/dí**)
- 10 tomorrow's temperature (**heiwán: ge**)

Exercise 5.2

Express the following by using the appropriate possessive marker:

Example: Your computer is too slow → **Ngóh go dihnlóuh taal maahn**

- 1 Compliment someone on their shoes (**deui hàaih**)
_____ **hàaih hóu leng wo**
- 2 Ask for the price of your friend's coat (**gihn láu**)
_____ **láu géi dó chí a?**
- 3 Describe Hong Kong's airport (**go géichéuhng**) to a friend
_____ **géichéuhng hóu daaih ga**
- 4 Your sports car (**ga páouché**) has broken down
_____ **páouché waiih-jó**
- 5 More than one of your relatives (**chānchik**) is coming to see you
_____ **chānchik làih taam ngóh**
- 6 Your wife (**taaitái**) is waiting for you
_____ **taaitái dáng-gán ngóh**
- 7 Your son (**jái**) likes to sing
_____ **jái jingyi cheung-gó**
- 8 Your children (**jáiléui**) are in secondary school
_____ **jáiléui duhk-gán jinghohk**

Exercise 5.3

Translate into Cantonese:

- 1 This watch (**jek sáubín**) is mine
- 2 The piano (**go gongkàhn**) is hers
- 3 That house (**gān iik**) is theirs

- 4 These books (**dī syā**) are yours
- 5 Those pictures (**dī wá**) are Miss Chan's
- 6 This place (**go wái**) is ours
- 7 This office (**go haahn-gūng-sāt**) is Mr Lam's
- 8 The money (**dī chái**) is my wife's

UNIT SIX

Possession and existence: **yáuh**

The verb **yáuh**, like 'have' in English, serves both as a main verb ('I have a question') and as an auxiliary ('Have you sent the letter?'). Like all verbs in Cantonese, it keeps the same form for different persons:

Ngóh yáuh yāt go jái yāt go léui	I have a son and a daughter
Léih juhng yáuh gēiwuìh	You still have a chance
Kéuih yáuh géi gāan ūk	She has several houses

Unusually, however, it has one irregular form: **móuh** is the negative form of **yáuh**. So, 'I don't have' is **ngóh móuh** (not ***ngóh mēh yáuh**):

Léih móuh gīngyihm	You don't have experience
Ngóhdeih móuh sailouhjái	We don't have any children
Kéuihdeih móuh ūkkéi	They don't have a home

The question form is composed by putting **yáuh** 'have' and **móuh** 'not have' together as **yáuh-móuh** (not ***yáuh-mēh-yáuh**):

Léih yáuh-móuh mahntàih a?	Do you have any questions?
Ngóhdeih yáuh-móuh sīhgun a?	Do we have time?
Kéuihdeih yáuh-móuh chín a?	Do they have money?

See Unit 23 for more on questions of this kind.

Existential **yáuh**

yáuh can also mean 'there is' (like Spanish 'hay', French 'il y a', etc.). Similarly, **móuh** can mean 'There is not' and **yáuh-móuh** 'Is there . ?'.

Héunggóng yáuh hóu dō dīksí

(lit. Hong Kong have very many taxis)

There are lots of taxis in Hong Kong

Nídouh móuh hūngmāu

(lit. here not-have pandas)

There are no pandas here

Tóí seuhngmih yáuh géi jek díp

(lit. table on-top have a few plates)

There are a few plates on the table

Notice that no preposition is needed: the sentence simply begins with the place expression (see Unit 13).

yáuh in this sense also serves to introduce an indefinite noun phrase:

Yáuh (yāt) go yáuh wán léih (not *Yāt go yáuh wán léih)

(lit. have a person seeking you)

A man is looking for you

Yáuh géi go bohksāng hóu lāu

(lit. have several students very angry)

Several students are angry

Yáuh hóu dō haakyáuh lāih-jó

(lit. have many guests came)

Many guests came

A verb can be added to show what is to be done with the item introduced by **yáuh/móuh**:

Ngóh gāmyaht yáuh gūngfó jōuh

(lit. I today have homework to do)

I have homework to do today

Nídouh móuh sām máaih

(lit. here have no clothes to buy)

There are no clothes to buy here

Yahpbiuh yáuh-móuh yéuh sīhk a?

(lit. inside have or have not anything to eat)

Is there anything to eat inside?

Note that there is no need to distinguish infinitives from the regular form of the verb.

yáuh as auxiliary

yáuh also serves as an auxiliary verb, rather like 'have' in English 'They have left', but normally only in the negative form **móuh** and in questions as **yáuh-móuh**:

Kéuih gāmyaht móuh fāan-gūng He hasn't been to work today
Ngóh móuh jough-gwo sīnsūang I've never been a teacher

- A: **Kéuihdeih yáuh-móuh bīn ūk a?** Have they moved house?
 B: **Yáuh a (būn-jó la)** Yes (they have)
 A: **Léih yáuh-móuh hohk-gwo** Have you learnt Putonghua?
Póutūng-wá a?
 B: **Móuh a (móuh hohk-gwo a)** No (I haven't)

Note the close relationship here between **yáuh/móuh** and the aspect markers **jó** and **gwo** (**gwo** can appear in sentences with **móuh** or **yáuh-móuh** but **jó** cannot: see Unit 18). The use of **yáuh** alone as an auxiliary is rare, but a useful idiom is **yáuh lohk** 'Someone's getting off' (used on minibuses, and so on to express the wish to get off):

Yáuh lohk, mǝi (Someone's) getting off, please
Chīhamíhn yáuh lohk (Someone's) getting off just ahead

Adjectives formed with yáuh

yáuh and **móuh** can also be added to nouns to form adjectives:

yáuh	+	chín money	→	yáuh-chín	rich
yáuh	+	sām heart	→	yáuh-sām	thoughtful, kind
yáuh	+	yuhng use	→	yáuh-yuhng	useful
móuh	+	yuhng use	→	móuh-yuhng	useless
yáuh	+	láu substance	→	yáuh-láu	substantial, learned
móuh	+	láu substance	→	móuh-láu	vacuous, ignorant

The adjectives thus formed can then be modified in the usual way (see Unit 9):

Dòeh léihdeih gam yáuh-sām

Thank you for being so thoughtful

Kéuih lóuhgūng hóu yáuh-chín, batgwo taai móuh-lín

Her husband is very rich but too vacuous

Exercise 6.1

Turn the following statements into question, positive or negative statements as specified:

Example: **Ngóh yáuh mahntàih** I have a problem → negative: **Ngóh móuh mahntàih**

- 1 **Ngóh yáuh yípin** (I have an opinion) → negative
- 2 **Léih yáuh beimaht** (You have a secret) → question
- 3 **Gāmyaht yáuh sūsik** (Today we have the latest information) → negative
- 4 **Faatgwok yáuh Jínggwokyàhn** (There are Chinese people in France) → question
- 5 **Chéutbín móuh yàhn** (There's nobody outside) → positive
- 6 **Kéuih yáuh behng** (She has a disease) → negative
- 7 **Léih yáuh láihmaht** (You have a gift) → question
- 8 **Bún syūyáuh Jūngmàhjih** (There are Chinese characters in the book) → negative
- 9 **Sāihh yáuh fóchē-jaahn** (There's a railway station at Shatin) → question
- 10 **Kāhmyaht móuh tsuiyèuhag** (There was no sunshine yesterday) → positive

Exercise 6.2

Answer the following questions about yourself using **yáuh** or **móuh** as appropriate:

- 1 **Léih yáuh-móuh yāt haak mǎn a** (\$100)?
- 2 **Léih hái Hēunggóng yáuh-móuh pàhngyáuh a** (friends)?
- 3 **Léihdeih yáuh-móuh dihnlóuh a** (computer)?
- 4 **Léih gān fóng yáuh-móuh hūngwái a** (space in your room)?
- 5 **Léih yáuh-móuh sīngaan hohk Gwóngdūng-wá a** (time to study Cantoucese)?
- **Léihdeih yáuh-móuh hemi-gwo Gwóngjāu a** (been to Guangzhou)?
- 7 **Léih gamyaht yáuh-móuh tái sāmán a** (watch the news today)?

- 8 Léih yáuh-móuh hìngcheui jyun gung a (interested in changing your job)?

Exercise 6.3

Translate these questions into Cantonese:

- 1 Do you have a car (**chē**)?
- 2 Do you have brothers or sisters (**hīngdaih jómuih**)?
- 3 Do you have a mobile phone (**sáutàih dihwá**)?
- 4 Have you been to Beijing (**Běikīng**)?
- 5 Has she visited (**taam-gwo**) you?
- 6 There are no birds (**jeukjái**) here.
- 7 There are many minibuses (**síubā**) in Hong Kong.
- 8 Is there anybody inside (**yahpuih**)?
- 9 Are there students in the classroom (**fosāt**)?
- 10 Is there any good news (**hóm siusik**) today?

UNIT SEVEN

Being: **haih**

The verb **haih** 'to be' is straightforward in form, but used in ways which do not always match those of English and other European languages. It is used to introduce noun phrases, as in making introductions and identifying people:

Ngóh haih Chàhn Siu Míng	I'm Chan Siu Ming
Léih haih bīngō a?	Who are you?
Kéuih haih yī sāng	She's a doctor

As we saw in Unit 5, many such statements can also be made without **haih**, especially when a sentence particle such as the explanatory **lèihgá** is added (see Unit 25):

Nī go haih ngóh làahm-pàhngyáuh	This is my boyfriend
or Nī go ngóh làahm-pàhngyáuh (lèihgá)	
Ngóhdeih haih Chuihjáuyáhn	We are Chiu Chow (people)
or Ngóhdeih Chuihjáuyáhn (lèihgá)	

Note in particular that **haih** is not used with predicative adjectives, which are typically introduced by **hóu** (*lit.* 'very': see Unit 9):

Ngóh yìhgā hóu mǒhng	I'm busy now
(not * Ngóh yìhgā haih hóu mǒhng)	
Léih gājē hóu leng	Your (elder) sister is beautiful
(not * Léih gājē haih hóu leng)	
Ngóh tǎhng kéuih hóu suhk	I know him well (<i>lit.</i> I with him familiar)
(not * Ngóh tǎhng kéuih haih hóu suhk)	

haih showing agreement

haih also serves to indicate agreement and as an answer to certain types of question, **haih** meaning 'yes' and its negative form **mhaih** 'no':

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| A: Hóu gwai wo | It's very expensive |
| B: Haih a | Yes, it is |
| A: Léih jǎnhuìh seun mē? | Do you really believe it? |
| B: Mhaih a | No, I don't |

haih should not be taken simply as a counterpart to 'yes', however, since:

(i) **haih** can indicate agreement with a negative sentence:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| A: Léih mēh seun àh? | Don't you believe it? |
| B: Haih a | No (I don't) |
| A: Kéuihdeih meih dou mē? | Haven't they arrived yet? |
| B: Haih a | No (they haven't) |

(ii) The most common types of question do not take **haih** for an answer. Instead, the verb of the original question is repeated (see Unit 23):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| A: Ngóhdeih heui-mēh-heui máah yéh a? | Are we going shopping? |
| B: Heui a | Yes (not *haih) |
| A: Léih jūng-mēh-jūngyi a? | Do you like it? |
| B: Jūngyi a | Yes (not *haih) |

haih versus hái

Notice the difference in tone between **haih** and **hái**, which can also be translated as 'be' but in the sense of being located:

- | | | | | |
|-------------|----------|------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| haih | be | e.g. | Kéuih haih Yahbányàhn | She's Japanese |
| | | | Kéuih haih haahjéung | He's the principal |
| hái | be at/in | e.g. | Kéuih hái Seuhghóih | She's in Shanghai |
| | | | Ngóh hái syúfóng | I'm in the study |

Emphatic haih and ge

haih can serve to emphasize the following word(s), especially in concert with the particle **ge** at the end of the sentence:

Haih léih bong ngóh ge (emphasizing the subject **léih**)

It was you who helped me

Ní bún syū haih bīngō sung ga? (emphasizing the subject **bīngō**)

(lit. this book is who gave)

Who was it that gave (us) this book?

Fūng seun haih gāmyaht gei dou ge (emphasizing the adverb **gāmyaht**)

(lit. the letter is today arrived)

It was today the letter arrived

This formula is especially useful because, Cantonese being a tone language, there is limited scope for emphasizing a word through stress as is commonly done in English as in 'The letter arrived *today*'. The particle **ge** is characteristic of assertions (see Unit 25).

Exercise 7.1

Answer the questions affirmatively or negatively as indicated. Add the particle **a** for politeness.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 Léih chih dou àh? | Are you late? (answer: no) |
| 2 Léih héi-jó-sān làh? | Have you woken up? (yes) |
| 3 Léih behng-jó àh? | Are you sick? (no) |
| 4 Kéuih jáu-jó mē? | Has he left? (yes) |
| 5 Léih gin-gwo ngóh mē? | Have you seen me before? (no) |
| 6 Kéuih sik léih ge mē? | Does she know you? (no) |
| 7 Kéuih fan-jó làh? | Has she fallen asleep? (yes) |
| 8 Kéuih yāusik-gán àh? | Is he resting? (yes) |
| 9 Kéuih hóu guih àh? | Is he tired? (yes) |
| 10 Máh gausaah hoi-gán wái àh? | Is Professor Ma having a meeting?
(no) |
| 11 Léih mih sik kéuih mē? | Don't you know him? (no) |
| 12 Léih msái faan gung àh? | Don't you need to go to work?
(no) |

Exercise 7.2

Choose **haih** or **hái** as required:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Kéuihdeih _____ Méihgwokyàhn | They are American |
| 2 Kéuih _____ ngóh sailóu | He's my brother |
| 3 Kéuih _____ hohkhaauh | She's at school |
| 4 Kéuihdeih m̀h _____ Heunggóng | They are not in Hong Kong |
| 5 Ngóh _____ Seuhng hóiyàhn | I'm Shanghaiese |
| 6 Go dói _____ kéuih ge | The bag is his |
| 7 Léih Sāang _____ gūngsī | Mr Lee is at the office |
| 8 Ngóhdeih _____ pāhngyáuh | We're friends |
| 9 Ngóh go jái _____ ūkkéi | My son is home |
| 10 Kéuih _____ ngóh tūnghohk | He's my classmate |

† Exercise 7.3

Use **haih** and **ge** to emphasize the italicized word(s):

Example: Ngóh *gaau* Yīngmán I teach English → Ngóh **haih** *gaau* Yīngmán **ge**

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Lóuhbáan góng bái ngóh tēng | The boss told me |
| 2 Ngóh bái bún syū léih | I gave you the book |
| 3 Kéuih <i>gām</i> fū jáu | He left <i>this morning</i> |
| 4 Glhn sāam <i>géisih</i> máaih | When was this shirt bought? |
| 5 Go chēung <i>bīng</i> hōt? | Who opened the window? |
| 6 Ngóh <i>hái</i> nīdoh dāng léih | I'll wait for you <i>here</i> |
| 7 Kéuih <i>taaitái</i> wán dóu | His wife found it |
| 8 Kéuih <i>hái</i> Taaigwok jōng chē | He had a car crash in <i>Thailand</i> |

UNIT EIGHT

Noun classifiers

To refer to a certain number of items, Cantonese (like other varieties of Chinese and many Asian languages) calls for a classifier (or measure) after the number. While in English relatively few nouns have such words associated with them, (for example 'a brace of pheasants', 'twenty head of cattle'), in Cantonese all nouns have such words and they must be used, for example:

yāt go yàhn	one person
léuhng tiuh yá	two fish
sei jek gáu	four dogs
sahp tou hei	ten films

Classifiers pose two different problems:

- (i) which one to use with which noun;
- (ii) when and where to use them.

First, however, it is useful to distinguish some sub-types of classifier.

Measures

These are in the narrow sense words used in counting quantities as in 'two dozen eggs':

léuhng bohng ngàuhyhk	two pounds of beef
yāt gán choi	a catty of vegetables (1 catty – 22 ounces)
bun da gáidáun	half a dozen eggs

Containers

These form an open-ended category since any container can serve as a measure:

sām búi chàh	three cups of tea
léuhng hahp tóng	two boxes of sweets
yāt bāau máih	a bag of (uncooked) rice
yāt dīp chòl	a dish of vegetables

These container words can also be used as nouns in their own right, in which case they generally take the classifier **go**:

yāt go wún	a bowl	léuhng go háp	two boxes
dó yāt go búi	another glass/cup	gái jek díp	several plates

Collective classifiers

These refer to a grouping of items:

nī bān hohksāang	this class of students
gó děul laahpsuap	that pile of rubbish
yāt daahp syū	a pile of books
yāt tou sán sām	a set of new clothes
gó deul hàaih	that pair of shoes

Unfortunately, not all things that are treated as pairs in English take **deui**: 'a pair of trousers' is **yāt tūh fu**, 'a pair of scissors' **yāt bá gaaujín**. On the other hand, there are other uses of **deui** which are understandable:

ngóh deui sáu
(lit. my pair (of) hands)
my (two) hands

yāt deui fūfúh
(lit. one pair couple)
a (married) couple

nī deui mālélui
(lit. this pair twin girls)
these twin girls

Plurals and quantities with dī

The word **dī** can be seen as a special kind of measure, or more precisely as a collective classifier. It is used for both countable and uncountable nouns:

(a) referring to an unspecified number of countable items:

Dī cháang hóu tihm	The oranges are nice and sweet
Ngóh heui taam dī pàhngyóuh	I'm going to visit some friends
Kéuih dī tühngsìh taai mòhng	Her colleagues are too busy

(b) referring to quantities of uncountable substances:

Dī séui mǎh gau yih	The water is not hot enough
Ngóh yin máuih dī sīnnáaih	I need to buy some fresh milk
Léih dī chàh hóu hēung	Your tea smells good

Which classifier?

There are dozens of different classifiers, from the ubiquitous **go** to very specific items like **bún** in **bún syū** 'the book'. As the term suggests, classifiers generally serve to sort nouns into semantic classes of objects:

Classifier	Semantic class	Examples	
bá	tools, instruments	bá dōu	knife
ga	machines, vehicles	ga chē	the car
gān	buildings	gān ūk	the house
gihn	most clothes	gihn sām	shirt, dress
go	people	yāt go yī sāng	a doctor
	abstract things	nǐ go kyutdihng	this decision
		yāt go mung	a dream
jek	most animals	jek gáu	a dog
	one of a pair	yāt jek sáu	one hand

A further important criterion is that many common classifiers categorize objects by their shape:

Classifier	Characteristics	Examples	
faai	vertical surface	yāt faai geng	a mirror
fūk	square/rectangular	yat fūk wá	a picture
jeung	flat surface	yat jeung tóí	a table
jī	cylindrical	jī bát	a pen/pencil

lāp	small and round	yāt lap tóng	a sweet
tiuh	long and narrow	tiuh louh	the road

The shape criterion can override the semantic class criterion, so that animals and items of clothing distinguished by their elongated shape take **tiuh**, rather than **jek** or **gān**:

tiuh yá	fish	tiuh kwáhn	skirt/dress
tiuh sèh	snake	tiuh fu	trousers

The appropriate classifier (or measure) can usually be checked in a dictionary, although it should be borne in mind that alternative classifiers may exist for the same noun. A computer, for example, is classified variously as a machine (**yāt heuh dīhnlóuh**), or as a mere object (**yāt go dīhnlóuh**).

Using classifiers

The main cases in which a classifier must be used are (illustrated with the commonest classifiers, such as **go**):

(i) Following a number:

yāt go yīsāng	one doctor	sāam go yàhn	three people
léuhng go dīhnlóuh	two computers	sahp go háp	ten boxes

(ii) With the demonstratives **nī** or **lī** 'this' and **gó** 'that':

nī go sānlóuh	this child	gó go behngyàhn	that patient
nī go yínyàhn	this actor	gó go chéung	that window

While these usages may be familiar to readers who know Mandarin, two other important uses are more characteristically Cantonese:

(iii) In a possessive construction:

ngóh go jái	my son	kéuih gān fóng	her room
léih gihñ sāam	your dress	léihdeih chàhnng láu	your flat

This is a colloquial alternative to the possessive construction with **ge** (see Unit 5).

(iv) With a noun alone:

go hohksāang	a/the student	go gaasauh	a/the professor
gihn sāam	a/the dress	jek gáujái	a/the puppy

This usage typically refers to a particular item. When the noun it goes with comes before the verb it is definite (generally corresponding to 'the'):

Gihn sāam hón gwai	The dress is expensive
Ga chē jáu-jó	The car has gone
Go waih hóu tung	The stomach hurts

When the classifier and noun come after the verb it can be definite, but can also refer to an indefinite, but specific item ('a certain ...'):

Kéuth máaih-jó gihn sāam	She's bought a/the dress
Ngóh gāmyaht tái-jó bún syū	I read a/the book today
Kéuihdeih hoi-jó go wáhháun	They opened an/the account

Exercise 8.1

Fill the gap with a suitable measure:

- 1 yāt _____ baahkchoi (Chinese cabbage)
- 2 bun _____ mǎihgwáifā (roses)
- 3 yāt _____ seun (letter)
- 4 yāt _____ jyūyahk (pork)
- 5 yāt _____ sǎngaan (time)
- 6 léuhng _____ bējáu (beer)
- 7 yāt _____ tō-háai (slippers)
- 8 gét _____ sǎijōng (suit)

Exercise 8.2

Order the following items at a restaurant, adding **ngóh** for politeness at the beginning or end of the sentence (see Unit 27):

- 1 two glasses (**būi**) of red wine (**hǎhng jáu**)
- 2 a dish (**díhp**) of fried noodles (**cháu mih**)
- 3 three bowls (**wún**) of rice (**faahn**)
- 4 another pair (**deni**) of chopsticks (**faaijǐ**)
- 5 a bottle (**jēun**) of water (**séui**)
- 6 a menu (**chāan-pái**)
- 7 two wine glasses (**jáu-būi**)

- 8 a pot (**wùh**) of hot water (**yiht séui**)
 9 a piece (**gihh**) of cake (**daahn-gōu**)
 10 a cup (**būi**) of coffee (**gafé**)

Exercise 8.3

Match the following items with the appropriate classifier or measure:

A clothing

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1 tāi tie | a gihh |
| 2 hàaih (one) shoe | b tiuh |
| 3 sājōng suit | c déng |
| 4 móu hat | d jek |
| 5 láu coat | e tau |

B stationery

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 gaaújín scissors | a fūk |
| 2 bāt pen | b bá |
| 3 báan board | c jéung |
| 4 yàuh-wá oil painting | d jī |
| 5 kāatpín business card | e faai |

Exercise 8.4

Choose the appropriate classifier to replace **ge** in the following possessive expressions:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1 kéuih ge sáubin her watch | a jéung |
| 2 lóuhbáan ge tóí the boss's desk | b tiuh |
| 3 gó chàhng láu ge mùhn the door of that flat | c jek |
| 4 ngóh ge sósih my key | d gu |
| 5 léih ge séunggēi your camera | e douh |

UNIT NINE

Adjectives

Adjectives are words which denote properties or qualities. Typically they serve to modify or describe nouns, and can also appear in comparative forms (see Unit 12). Since the dividing line between adjectives and verbs is not always clear, the Chinese equivalents of adjectives are often termed stative verbs. While learners need not worry about whether there 'are' adjectives in Cantonese, it is useful to remember that the words in question generally behave like verbs: that is, what applies to verbs generally applies to adjectives too.

Attributive adjectives

These modify the noun. All such adjectives come before the noun they modify:

pèhng ge sāam
gwāai ge sailouhjái
cho ge kyutdihng

cheap clothes
good, obedient children
a wrong decision

The particle *ge*, which we have already seen in possessive constructions (Unit 5), serves here to link the adjective and noun. The adjective can be modified by *hóu* 'very', *jeui* 'most', etc.:

hóu káhnlínk ge hohksāang
jeui línheng ge boksih
gam daaih ge yinghéung

hard-working students
the youngest PhD
such a big influence

Predicative adjectives

These are used to state that something has a certain property. The verb **haih** 'to be' is not used (see Unit 7), but instead the adverb **hóu** is usually included.

Ngóh hóu hōisām	I'm happy
Dī tōng hóu hàahm	The soup is salty
Kéuih gihn sām hóu leng	Her dress is beautiful
Gāmyaht hóu sǎp	It's humid today

hóu by itself can mean 'good' or 'very', but when used in this way it does not really mean 'very' but is merely part of the syntax of predicative adjectives.

Modifying adjectives

Other modifiers such as **gēi** 'quite' and **gam** 'so' can appear in place of **hóu**, for example:

Dī gēipiu gēi pèhng	The air tickets are quite cheap
Léih go sǎutàih dihnlóuh gam gwai	Your laptop computer is so expensive
Go daahn-gōu taai tihm	The cake is too sweet
Ōnchyùhn jeui gányiu	Safety is most important
Tiuh sing gau (sai) chéuhng	The string is (more than) long enough

Reduplicated adjectives

Another strategy to modify the meaning of an adjective is reduplication together with the suffix **-dái**:

dīn crazy → dīn-dīn-dái	rather crazy
fú bitter → fú-fú-dái	rather bitter
sau thin → sau-sau-dái	rather thin
tihm sweet → tihm-tihm-dái	rather sweet
lyúhn warm → lyúhn-lyúhn-dái	rather warm
muh bored/boring → muh-muh-dái	rather bored (or boring)

Note the change to a high rising tone on the repeated syllable (see Unit 3): this happens in all cases except where the original tone is high level

(as in **dīn-dīn-déi** 'rather crazy') or already high rising (as in **fú-fú-déi** 'rather bitter'). These forms are used to qualify the force of an adjective:

Dī Jūng-yehk fú-fú-déi	Chinese medicine is rather bitter
Tūh gāai sāp-sāp-déi	The street is a bit wet
Tou hei muhn-mún-déi	The film was fairly boring
Ngóh gokdāk muhn-mún-déi	I feel rather bored

Note that these forms are not used together with **hóu** or other modifiers such as **gái** 'quite':

Nī go gaausauh dīn-dīn-déi ge	This professor is pretty crazy
(not * Nī go gaausauh hóu dīn-dīn-déi ge)	
Go wuhsih fèih-féi-déi	The nurse is rather chubby
(not * Go wuhsih géi fèih-féi-déi)	

Such reduplicated forms are also used as adverbs (Unit 10).

Exercise 9.1

Use appropriate predicative adjectives to describe the following:

Example: the film on an aeroplane: **Tou hei hóu chéuhng** The film was long

- 1 your girlfriend
- 2 your children or your friend's children
- 3 a teacher you like
- 4 a colleague at work
- 5 your good points (to your boss)
- 6 your favourite film star
- 7 a car you would like to own
- 8 the food at school or university
- 9 the weather in Hong Kong
- 10 a novel you have been reading

Exercise 9.2

Add an appropriate attributive adjective to modify the following.

Example: **Ngóh gòh-gòh hái yāt gāan hóu yáuh-méng ge gūngsi jowh-yéh**
My (elder) brother works for a famous company

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Kéuih ùkkéi yáuh go _____
haak-tēng | At home there is a ... living room |
| 2 Deuimihn yáuh gāan _____
chāantēng | Across the street there is a ...
restaurant |
| 3 Ngóh jeni gahn tái-gwo bún _____
syū | I have recently read a ... book |
| 4 Ngóh séung yiu jek _____ gáu-jái | I would like a ... puppy |
| 5 Ngóh tái-gwo yāt tou _____ hei | I have seen a ... film |
| 6 Ngóhdeih yáuh di _____ gūngfo | We have some ... homework |
| 7 Kéuih ùkkéi yáuh go _____
mahntàih | There is a ... problem at his home |
| 8 Ngóh yihchihn yáuh go _____
lòuhui | I used to have a ... teacher |

Exercise 9.3

Substitute a modifier (e.g. géi, gam, tsai, gau saai) for hóu:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih hóu méhnyi | We are satisfied |
| 2 Kéuih hóu lèk | She's smart (capable) |
| 3 Kéuihdeih hóu guih | They're tired |
| 4 Dī sailouhjái hóu dāknyi | The children are cute |
| 5 Tou hei hóu lohngmaahn | The film is romantic |
| 6 Kéuih di tàuhfaai hóu dyún | Her hair is very short |
| 7 Dī gāsi hóu pèhng | The furniture is cheap |
| 8 Go gasusauh hóu yáuh-méng | The professor is famous |
| 9 Go hohksáang hóu láahn | The student is lazy |
| 10 Dī séung hóu leng | The photos are pretty |

Exercise 9.4

Form reduplicated adjectives to express the meaning based on the adjective provided, remembering the change of tone:

Example: The baby is chubby (fèih) Go bībī fèih-féi-déi

- 1 This dish (dīhp sung) is a bit hot (laah)
- 2 The soup (dī tōng) is rather sour (syūn)
- 3 Your clothes (dī sāan) are a bit wet (sāp)
- 4 The weather (tūnhai) is rather cold (dang)
- 5 Her face (tsai mih) is rather round (yūhn)
- 6 Her eyes (deui ngáahn) are a little red (hūhng)

- 7 His office (**go baahn-gūng-sāt**) is rather messy (**lyuhn**)
- 8 The button (**lāp láu**) is rather loose (**sūng**)
- 9 Your glasses (**fu ngáahn-géng**) are rather fuzzy (**mùhng**)
- 10 Your husband (**lóuhgūng**) is a bit drunk (**jeui**)

UNIT TEN

Adverbs of manner

Several types of adverb phrase can be used to modify a verb or verb phrase:

- with **dāk**
- with **gám**
- with reduplication.

These types of adverb phrase are generally based on adjectives (see Unit 9).

1 Adverb phrases with **dāk**

The most general form of adverbial phrase is formed with **dāk** and an adjective after the verb. The order is thus: verb – **dāk** – adjective. As usual the adjective is normally preceded by a modifier such as **hóu** or **gél**, and so on (see Unit 9):

Ga chē hàahng dāk hóu maahn
(*lit.* the car travel manner very slow)
The car moves very slowly

Dī haakyáhn síhk dāk géi hōisām
(*lit.* the guests eat manner quite happy)
The guests are eating quite happily

Go góngsí góng dāk t'ai faai
(*lit.* the lecturer speak manner too fast)
The lecturer talks too fast

When the verb is followed by an object, the verb is repeated so that **dāk** immediately follows the verb:

Ngóh cheung-gō cheung dāk hóu chā
 (lit. I sing songs sing manner very bad)
 I sing very badly

Kéuih waahk-wá waahk dāk géi leung
 (lit. she paints pictures paints manner quite nice)
 She draws quite nicely

Léih góng-yéh góng dāk tsai daaih-sēng
 (lit. you speak things speak manner too big voice)
 You speak too loud

2 Adverb phrases with gám

An adjective together with **gám** 'thus' forms an adverbial phrase which comes before the verb:

Dī gwūnjung hóu daaih-sēng gám paak-sáu
 (lit. the audience very big voice thus clap hands)
 The audience applauded loudly

Go yàuh-haak hóu yáuh-láihmaauh gám maha ngóh
 (lit. the tourist very politely thus asked me)
 The tourist asked me very politely

Go sīgēi hóu daaih-líhk gám sān mūhn
 (lit. the driver very big-force thus closed door)
 The driver closed the door hard

Note here also the use of **gám** by itself or **gám yéung** to mean 'in this way':

Ngóh mē wúih gám góng
 I wouldn't put it like that

Kéuih mē yinggōi gám yéung sái chún
 He shouldn't waste money in this way

3 Reduplicated adverbs

A limited number of adverbs of manner are formed by repeating an adjective and adding the suffix **-dái**:

gwāai	obedient	→	gwāai-gwāai-déi	obediently
hēng	light	→	hēng-hēng-déi	lightly

These are placed before the verb they modify:

Léih yiu gwāai-gwāai-déi joun gūngfo
(lit. you need obediently do homework)
You have to obediently do your homework

Yáuh yáhn hēng-hēng-déi paak mùhn
(lit. have person lightly knock door)
Someone knocked lightly on the door

A few such forms are also used without -déi:

maahn	slow	→	maahn-máan hàahng	to walk slowly
hóih-sám	happy	→	hóih-hóih-sám-sám joun yéhn	to work happily

Note that:

- (i) The repeated adverb may take on a changed tone (with a low tone becoming a high rising one: see Units 3 and 9):

jíhng	quiet	→	jíhng-jíng-déi	quietly
--------------	-------	---	-----------------------	---------

- (ii) In adjectives with two syllables, each syllable is repeated separately:

gáan-dān	simple	→	gáan-gáan-dān-dān	simply
hīng-sūng	relaxed	→	hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng	in a relaxed manner

All these forms of adverb come before the verb they modify:

Léih jíhng-jíng-déi yáhp heul lá
Go in quietly

Kéuih táu-táu-déi jáu-jó
He left secretly

Kéuih gáan-gáan-dān-dān gám hīngjók sūngyuh
She celebrated her birthday in a simple way

Ngóhdeih hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng, gáan-gáan-dān-dān gám dooh-ga
We spend our holiday in a laid-back, simple style

Reduplicated adverbs, especially those of more than one syllable, can combine with **gám** as described in (ii) above:

Kéuih sòh-só-déi gám siu
He smiles in a foolish way

Léih syū-syū-fuhk-fuhk gám fan háidouh lā
Lie down here comfortably

Kéuihdeih háidouh hing-hing-sung-sung gám tēng gō
They're relaxing listening to songs

Exercise 10.1

Add the adverbial phrase provided to the following sentences:

- Kéuihdeih hàahng fāan ūkkéi**
They walk home slowly (**màahn-máan**)
- Kéuih gaisiuh jìhgéi**
He introduces himself excitedly (**hóu hīngfáhn gám**)
- Kéuih mahn-jó yāt go mahntàih**
He asked a question boldly (**hóu daaih-dáam gám**)
- Kéuih só-jó dooh mahn**
She locked the door carefully (**hóu síusám gám**)
- Ngóh go jái wank-jó géi fūk wá**
My son drew several pictures quickly (**hóu faai gám**)
- Kéuih hohk-gán Gwóngdūng-wá**
He is studying Cantonese diligently (**hóu lóuhlihk gám**)
- Dī hohksāng tēng-gán yín-góng**
The students are listening to the lecture attentively (**hóu làuhsām gám**)
- Dī Hēunggóng hohksāng yèhng-jó béichoi**
The Hong Kong students won the competition comfortably (**hóu hīngsūng gám**)
- Yi-ngoih faatsāng-jó**
The accident happened suddenly (**hóu dahtyihh gám**)
- Ngóh jūngyi hīngjūk sāngyaht**
I like to celebrate birthdays happily (**hóu-hóu-sām-sām gám**)

Exercise 10.2

Use **dāk** to create adverbial phrases using the adjectives provided, repeating the verb where necessary (as in numbers 6–10):

Example: **Kéuih jáu *dāk* hóu faai** He runs quickly
Kéuih jǎ-chē *jā dāk* hóu mǎsām He drives carelessly

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Léih sé _____ hóu hóu | You write well |
| 2 | Ga fēigēi fēi _____ hóu dāi | The plane flies low |
| 3 | Ngóhdeih fan _____ hóu syūfuhk | We sleep comfortably |
| 4 | Kéuihdeih wáan _____ hóu hōisām | They play happily |
| 5 | Kéuih tiu _____ hóu yúhn | She jumps a long way |
| 6 | Kéuih yíng-séung _____ hóu leng | She takes pictures well |
| 7 | Ngóh yáuh-séui _____ hóu mǎahm | I swim slowly |
| 8 | Kéuih cheung-gō _____ hóu sai-sēng | She sings softly |
| 9 | Ngóh jyú-fauhn _____ hóu faai | I cook quickly |
| 10 | Ngóh tiu-móuh _____ hóu chǎ | I dance badly |

Exercise 10.3

Fill in the gaps with a suitable manner adverbial with **-gám**:

- 1 Ngóh (I) _____ sé nǐ fūng seun (write this letter)
- 2 Ngóhdeih (We) _____ tái houjǐ (read the newspaper)
- 3 Kéuih (He) _____ fan hái chòhng seuhngmǐhn (sleep on the bed)
- 4 Kéuihdeih (They) _____ jáu-jó (have left)
- 5 Léih Sǐujé (Miss Lee) _____ daup ngóh go mahm táih (answer my question)
- 6 Lóuhbǎan (The boss) _____ sǎan-jó dǒuh mùhn (closed the door)
- 7 Yíhp gaausauh (Professor Yip) _____ góng syū (give a lecture)
- 8 Dǐ hohksāang (The students) _____ tēng syū (listen to the lecture)
- 9 Go bìhbǐ (The baby) _____ wáan-gám (playing)
- 10 Kéuih (She) _____ haam-gám (crying)

UNIT ELEVEN

Adverbs of time, frequency and duration

While the adverbs introduced in the previous unit describe the manner of action, those included in this unit are concerned with the way events take place in time.

1 Adverbs of time

Given that verbs do not indicate tense in Cantonese, adverbs are especially important in specifying when events take place:

Kéulh yihgā juhng hái yīyún
She's still in hospital (now)

Kéulh gójahnsih juhng hái yīyún
She was still in hospital (then)

Ngóh jikhāak heui Yínggwok taam léih
I'm going to visit you in England (right away)

Ngóh dath-yih-sih heui Yínggwok taam léih
I'll visit you in England (in the future)

In English the tense of the verb indicates when things take place, and the adverb can easily be omitted, while in Cantonese only the adverb indicates the time. Common adverbs include:

Present:	yihgā	now	gāmyaht	today
Recent past:	tàuh-sūn	just now	ngāam-ngāam	just
Past:	yihchihh	before	būnlòih	originally
	seuhng chi	last time	gójahnsih	then
	kāmyaht	yesterday	chihnyaht	the day before yesterday

Future:	jíkhāak	right away	dāih yīh sìh, īāih-āih	in future
	hah chi	next time	doush	when the time comes
	tingyaht	tomorrow	haahyaht	the day after tomorrow

These adverbs may come:

(a) Before the verb:

Ngóhdeih yìhgā chēut heui	We're going out now
Kéniē ngāam-ngāam jáu-jó	He just left

(b) Before the subject:

Búnloh ngóh séung dohk yífo	Originally I wanted to study medicine
Tāuhsīn kéniē mgeidāak dāi sósīh	Just now he forgot his keys

2 Adverbs of frequency and duration

Useful adverbs to describe the frequency of an action include:

sèhngyaht	always	yāt chí	once
dōsou	mostly	léung chí	twice
yáuh(-jahn)-sīh	sometimes	sām chí	three times
yāt sìh-sìh/yāt sí-sìh	occasionally	gái chí	several times
pihngsīh	normally	tūngsèuhng	usually

múih 'each' can be used to form adverbial phrases:

múih go yaht	every month	múih go sīngkèih	every week
---------------------	-------------	-------------------------	------------

Note that several common time expressions of one syllable do not take a classifier, and can form reduplicated adverbs:

múih chí or chí-chí	every time	(not * múih go chí)
múih yaht or yaht-yaht	every day	(not * múih go yaht)
múih līn or līn-līn	every year	(not * múih go līn)
múih jīu or jīu-jīu	every morning	(not * múih go jīu)
múih máahn or máahn-máahn	every evening	(not * múih go máahn)

All these adverbs generally come before the verb:

Kéuih múih jīn lukh dīm héi sām ge
(lit. he each morning six o'clock gets up)
He gets up at six every morning

Kéuih yaht-yaht sái-tàuh
(lit. she daily washes hair)
She washes her hair every day

Note the order in phrases such as the following describing the frequency of actions:

yāt līhn yāt chí	once a year (lit. one year one time)
múih go yuht yāt chí	once a month (lit. each month one time)

Such phrases are often split up with the more general term coming before the verb and the more specific frequency expression after:

Ngóhdeih yāt līhn heui yāt chí douh-gu
(lit. we one year go one time spend holiday)
We go on holiday once a year

Ngóhdeih līhn-līhn fāan heui yāt chí
(lit. we each year return go one time)
We go back once a year

Adverbs of frequency may come after the verb and object:

Ngóh heui-gwo Daaihluhk yāt chí	I've been to mainland China once
Ngóh gin-gwo yisāng sāam chí	I've seen the doctor three times

Adverbs of both frequency and duration can be used in the following ways

(i) Between the verb and the object:

Ngóh heui-gwo yat chí Daaihluhk	I've been to the mainland once
Kéuih jyú-gwo géi chí faahn	He's cooked dinner a few times
Ngóh gāmyuht sái-gwo léuhng chí tàuh	I've washed my hair twice today
Ngóh gin-gwo sāam chí yisāng	I've seen the doctor three times
Kéuih duhk-jó sāam līhn Jūngmán	He has studied Chinese for three years

Ngóh diu-jó sèhng yaht yá	I've been fishing for a whole day
Ngóh tái-jó yāt go jūngtāuh syū	I've read for an hour
Kéuih síhk-jó yāt go yuht yeuk	She has been on medication for a month

- (ii) After the verb and object, with repetition of the transitive verb as seen in Unit 10:

Kéuih háau-síh háau-gwo géi chí	She's taken the exam several times
Kéuih jyú-faahn jyú-gwo géi chí	He's cooked dinner a few times
Ngóh duhk Jūngmán duhk-jó sāam lān	I've been studying Chinese for three years (or: I studied Chinese for three years)
Kéuih jyuh yíyún jyuh-jó yāt go yuht	She's been in hospital for a month (or: She stayed in hospital for a month)

As the translations suggest, this construction can refer either to a period of time leading up to the present, or to a completed period in the past (see Unit 18 on the aspect marker -jó).

Exercise 11.1

Add a suitable adverb to the following, paying attention to the position of the adverb:

- Ngóh hái Tsimshatsui**
I was in Tsimshatsui (yesterday)
- Kéuih dou-jó gēichèuhng**
She arrived at the airport (just now)
- Ngóh gin-gwo kénih**
I've met him (before)
- Kéuihdeih jūng-jó tātuh-jéung**
They won the first prize (last time)
- Ngóhdeih juhng sai**
We were still small (then)
- Ngóh jōuh wuhsih ge**
I used to be a nurse (originally)
- Ngóhdeih wán léih**
We'll contact you (next time)

- 8 **Kéuih hóu lán**
He got angry (immediately)
- 9 **Ngóh chéng léih sǎh-faahn**
I'll treat you to a meal (in future)
- 10 **Ngóhdeih hái Méihgwok jyuh-gwo**
We used to live in America (before)

Exercise 11.2

Say how often you engage in the following activities (fictitiously where necessary):

- 1 play tennis (**dá móhngkàuh**)
- 2 go swimming (**heui yàuh-séui**)
- 3 watch television (**tái dihsih**)
- 4 read the newspaper (**tái boujǐ**)
- 5 wash your hair (**sái tàuh**)
- 6 have a haircut (**jín tàuhfaan**)
- 7 buy groceries (**máaih sung**)
- 8 go to a concert (**heui yām-ngohk-wái**)
- 9 eat ice cream (**sǎh syutgáu**)
- 10 visit relatives (**taam chānchǐk**)

Exercise 11.3

State how long you do the following every day:

- 1 play video games (**dá gēi**)
- 2 practise Cantonese (**lihn Gwóngdūngwá**)
- 3 talk on the phone (**góng dihwá**)
- 4 cooking (**jyú-faahn**)
- 5 listen to music (**tēng yām-ngohk**)
- 6 reading (**tái-syū**)
- 7 chat with friends (**kīng-gái**)
- 8 stay on the Internet (**séuhng móhng**)
- 9 take a shower (**chūng lèuhng**)
- 10 write in a diary (**sé yahtgei**)

Exercise 11.4

Add an adverb of duration in the space provided. Note that the following

sentences involve reduplication of the verb.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Kéuih hoi wui hoi-jó _____ | She has been in a meeting |
| 2 Ngóhdeih sihk-faan sihk-jó _____ | We have been having a meal |
| 3 Kéuihdeih dá bō dá-jó _____ | They have been playing a ball game |
| 4 Ngóh sé seun sé-jó _____ | I have been writing letters |
| 5 Kéuih góí gyún góí-jó _____ | She has been marking papers |
| 6 Lohk yú lohkJó _____ | It's been raining |
| 7 Kéuih cheung-gō cheung-jó _____ | He's been singing |
| 8 Dī hohksāang jough gūngfo jough-jó _____ | The students have been doing homework |
| 9 Kéuihdeih aai-gāau aai-jó _____ | They've been arguing |
| 10 Kéuih jā-chē jā-jó _____ | He's been driving |

UNIT TWELVE

Comparison: **gwo** and **dī**

In this unit we look at ways of making simple comparisons. In colloquial Cantonese there are two basic kinds of comparison:

- (i) Where two things are explicitly being compared, **gwo** is used to mean 'more (adjective) than (noun)'. The word order is similar to the English (and quite unlike that in Mandarin):

Jenny sai gwo ngóh	Jenny is younger than me
Baat láu hóu gwo yih láu	The eighth floor is better than the second floor
Nī deui gwai gwo gó deui	This pair is more expensive than that one

Note that **gwo** is also a verb meaning 'cross' or 'pass', so it is natural that it comes to mean 'surpass' in comparisons.

- (ii) If the object of comparison is not expressed (i.e. there is no 'than . . .'), **dī** is used instead:

Jenny sai dī	Jenny is younger
Baat láu hóu dī	The eighth floor is better
Gó deui gwai dī	That pair is more expensive

dī literally means 'a little' but here serves largely to indicate a difference between the two items with respect to some property.

Modifying comparisons

Both kinds of comparison can be modified by adverbs of degree such as **hóu dō** 'much' and **sín-sín** 'a little', as follows:

- (1) In comparisons with **gwo**, the adverb of degree is simply added at the end of the construction:

Léih lék gwo kéuih hóu dô	You're much smarter than him
Kéuih gón gwo léih síu-síu	She's a little taller than you
Ngóh daaih gwo kéuih yát lán	I'm a year older than her

- (11) In comparisons where **di** would normally be used, a degree word such as **hóu dô** 'a lot' replaces **di**:

Ni go leng di	→ Ni go leng hóu dô	This one is much nicer
Ni go gwai di	→ Ni go gwai síu-síu	This one is a little more expensive
Ni go chúhng di	→ Ni go chúhng géi pòih	This one is several times heavier

The reason for this is that **di** literally means 'a bit', so that to combine it with an adverb like **hóu dô** 'a lot' would be a contradiction in terms. This shows that **di** as in **leng di** is not really equivalent to the suffix **-er** in English 'prettier', tempting though the equivalence may be.

júhng 'even' can be applied to both the **gwo** and **di** constructions, but comes *before* the adjective:

Gám chí júhng hóu gwo seuhng chí	This time is even better than last time
Gám yéung júhng hóu (di)	This way is even better

(**di** can be omitted here since the presence of **júhng** implies that a comparison is being made.)

Alternative forms of comparison

An alternative to the **gwo** form of comparison uses **béi** 'compare'. The word order is quite different since **béi** and the object of comparison come *before* the adjective:

Hahtin béi dūngtin chéuhng
(lit. summer compare winter long)
Summer is longer than winter

Héunggóng ge jándān béi Bākging dô
(lit. Hong Kong's hotels compare Beijing more)
There are more hotels in Hong Kong than Beijing

A modifying phrase comes after the adjective, as with **gwo**:

Kéuih béi ngóh sui yāt lín
(lit. she compare me young(er) one year)
 She's a year younger than me

Ngóh béi ngóh lóuhpòh daaih sāam sei
(lit. I compare my wife big three years)
 I'm three years older than my wife

Being basically a feature of Mandarin and written Chinese, the comparison with **béi** is more formal than the **gwo** construction. Learners who know some Mandarin will be able to use the **béi** construction readily in Cantonese, while other beginners would do best to stick with the colloquial **gwo**. The **béi** form does allow some comparisons which would not be possible with **gwo**, such as those expressing a change of state:

Kéuih béi gauh-lín sau-jó
(lit. she compare last year got thinner)
 She's got thinner since last year

Léih béi seuhng chí jennbòuh-jó
(lit. you compared last time improved)
 You've improved since last time

Yet another alternative is to omit **gwo** but add a phrase showing the degree of difference:

Kéuih gōu yàhndèih yāt go tàuh
(lit. he tall people one head)
 He's a head taller than everyone else

Ngóhndèih faai kéuih yāt bōuh
(lit. we fast him one step)
 We're a step ahead of him

This construction is commonly found with dimensional adjectives such as **daaih** and **sai**, which are often used in this way to mean 'older' and 'younger' respectively:

Léih gòhgō daaih léih géi dō a?
(lit. your brother big you how much?)
 How much older is your brother than you?

Kéuih sai ngóh yāt fihn
 (lit. she small me one year)
 She's a year younger than me

Comparison of adverbs

This involves combining the syntax of adverbs (Unit 10) with that of comparison; it thus comes for free in the sense that nothing new has to be learnt. Comparisons using **gwo**, **dī** or **béi** are added to adverbial constructions with **dāk**:

Kéuth tái dāk faai gwo ngóh
 (lit. he read manner quick than me)
 He reads faster than I do

Léih sé dāk leng dī
 (lit. you write manner nicer)
 You write better

Kéuihdeih béi ngóhdeih jowh dāk hóu
 (lit. they compare us do manner well)
 They do it better than we do

The main difficulty arises where the verb has an object and both are repeated (Unit 10):

Kéuth tái Jūngmán tái dāk faai gwo ngóh
 (lit. he reads Chinese reads manner quick than me)
 He reads Chinese more quickly than I do

Léih sé jīh sé dāk leng dī
 (lit. you write characters write manner nicer)
 You write characters better

Kéuihdeih jowh sāngyi béi ngóhdeih jowh dāk hóu
 (lit. they do business compare us do manner well)
 They do business better than we do

Superlatives

Superlatives are expressed straightforwardly by **jewi**, or as a colloquial alternative by **ji**:

jeui leng	most beautiful	ji lek	the smartest
jeui fonghihn	most convenient	ji pèhng	the cheapest
jeui hingfáhn	most excited	ji jeng	the best, coolest (slang)

These forms are typically used as follows:

(i) Attributively, with **ge**:

jeui fongbihn ge joughfaat	the most convenient method
jeui gányiu ge siusik	the most important news
ji pèhng ge gèlpiu	the cheapest air tickets

(ii) Predicatively, with **haih**:

Gám yéuhng jeui fongbihn	This way is the most convenient
Ni júng ji dái máaih	This kind is the best value

The order is often reversed beginning with the superlative expression as the subject:

Jeui fongbihn haih ní go deihdím
(lit. most convenient is this location)
This location is most convenient

Ji pèhng haih ní jek pàaihjí
(lit. most cheap is this brand)
This brand is the cheapest

A point to note here is that the range in which the comparison is to be made is specified *before* the superlative form:

Héunggóng jeui chéutméng ge gósáu
(lit. Hong Kong most famous singer)
The most famous singer in Hong Kong

Chyúhn gwok jeui daaih ge ngáhnghòhng
(lit. whole country most big bank)
The biggest bank in the whole country

Gam dô jáuàuh jeui hóu-síhk haih ní gān
(lit. so many restaurants most good-to-eat is this one)
This is the best of all the restaurants to eat at

This ordering illustrates a general tendency in Cantonese to put the more general, inclusive term before the more specific one.

Exercise 12.1

Decide whether the following comparisons would use **gwo** or **di**, and translate as much of the sentence as you can into Cantonese:

- 1 It's warmer today
- 2 She's happier now
- 3 My friend is older than me
- 4 She's much taller than before
- 5 It's slower this time
- 6 This restaurant is cheaper than that one
- 7 I like dancing more than singing
- 8 Your idea is better

Exercise 12.2

Make any meaningful comparison between the following:

- 1 Today (**gāmyaht**) and yesterday (**kàhmyaht**)
- 2 Girls (**léuih-jái**) and boys (**làahm-jái**)
- 3 Shirts (**séutsāam**) and ties (**léngtāi**)
- 4 Toronto (**Dòlèuhdō**) and London (**Lèuhdēun**)
- 5 Chinese (**Jūngmán**) and English (**Yingmán**)
- 6 Swimming (**yàuh-séui**) and jogging (**páau-bouh**)
- 7 Cantonese food (**Gwóngdūng choh**) and Chiu Chow food (**Chihh-jāu choh**)
- 8 Doing business (**jouh sāangyi**) and teaching (**gaau-syū**)

Exercise 12.3

Make the following comparisons more explicit using the adverb given in brackets:

- 1 **Gām-lín dang gwo gauh-lín**
This year is (much) colder than last year
- 2 **Gāmyaht lyúhn di**
It's (much) warmer today

- 3 **Léih dī tàuhfaat yìhghā dyám dī**
Your hair is (a little) shorter now
- 4 **Hēunggóng gwai gwo nīdonh**
Hong Kong is (several times) more expensive than here
- 5 **Ngóh guih gwo kéuh**
I'm (even) more tired than she is
- 6 **Síhk faahn pèhng gwo síhk mihn**
Eating rice is (even) cheaper than eating noodles
- 7 **Gām chí hohkfai bēi seuhng chí gwai**
This time the tuition is (a hundred dollars) more expensive than last time
- 8 **Kéuh gōu gwo ngóh**
She is (three inches) taller than me

† Exercise 12.4

A Express the following comparisons colloquially with **gwo**:

Example: **Fóché bēi bāsi faai** → **Fóché faai gwo bāsi**
The train is faster than the bus

- 1 **Hóiy-yú bēi yéuhng-yú gwai**
Wild fish are more expensive than farmed fish
- 2 **Héungpín bēi hùhng chàh héung**
Jasmine tea is more fragrant than black tea
- 3 **Làahnfā bēi gūkfā leng**
Orchids are prettier than chrysanthemums
- 4 **Go léui bēi go jái daaih léuhng sei**
The daughter is two years older than the son
- 5 **Nī bān hohksāang bēi gó bān kàhnghk**
This class is more hard-working than that one

B Express the following comparisons with **bēi**:

- 1 **Gauh hàaih syūfuhk gwo sām hàaih**
Old shoes are more comfortable than new ones
- 2 **Yìghā hewi Oujāu yùhngyih gwo yìhchūn**
Going to Australia now is easier than before
- 3 **Gūngsī gām-lín jaahn dāk dō gwo gauh-lín**
The company has earned more this year than last year
- 4 **Nī bān sūsyut hóu-tái gwo daaih yāt bān**
This novel is better than the first one
- 5 **Léih gam chí jōuh dāk hōn gwo seuhng chí**
This time you're doing better than last time

UNIT THIRTEEN

Prepositions: space and time

Three important classes of words are involved in the expression of location. We shall introduce these before showing how they are used in combination.

1 Prepositions

hái	at/in/on (also héung)	yàuh	(starting) from
héung	towards	lèih	(away) from
tùhng	with	gīng	(passing) via

Some of these items are also known as coverbs, since they have certain characteristics of verbs (see *Intermediate Cantonese*).

2 Demonstrative terms, based on **nī** 'this' and **gó** 'that'

nīdoh	here (also nīsyu)	gódoh	there (also gósyu)
nībīhn	over here, this way	góbīhn	over there, that way
nītàuh	around here (in this area)	gótàuh	around there (in that area)

3 Localizers or postpositions indicating spatial relationships

seuhngbīhn	on top of	hahbīhn	below
chībīhn	in front of	haubbīhn	behind
yahpīhn	inside	chēuthīhn	outside
léuibīhn	inside, within	ngoibīhn	outside
deuibīhn	opposite	jākbin	beside
jūnggāan	in the middle of	jīgāan	between

Note how these characteristically end in **bihh** or **mihh** meaning 'side' (the two forms being interchangeable in most cases).

Location

Using the words introduced above, several characteristic patterns are used to indicate location in space:

- (i) **hái** followed by names of places:

Dī sailouhjai hái gódouh	The children are over there
Kéuhdeih lēi màaih hái nīsyu	They are hiding here
Ngóh gāmyaht sèhng yaht hái ōkkéi	I was at home all day today
Kéuh hái Méihgwok duhk-syū	She studies in America
Ngóhdeih hái hohkhsauh hōi-wái	We're having a meeting at school
Kéuh yihgā mē hái gūngsi	She is not at the office at the moment

Note that the word **háidouh** 'to be here' is generally used instead of **hái nīdouh** when presence or absence is at issue. For example, on the telephone:

Léih sāng mē háidouh	Mr Lee is not here
(not * Léih sāng mē hái nīdouh)	

háidouh is also used to express action in progress (progressive aspect: Unit 19).

- (ii) **hái** together with a localizer:

Yīsāng hái seuhngbihn	The doctor is upstairs
Heiyún hái deuimihh	The cinema is just opposite (across the street)
Gíngchaat hái yahpbihn	The police are inside

A noun phrase can come between **hái** and the localizer, in the pattern **hái (...) X-mihh/bihh**:

Bún syū hái jēung tóí seuhngbihn
(*lit* the book on the table top)
The book is on the table

Kéuih kéih hái pō syuh hauhnihh

(lit. she stood at the tree behind)

She stood behind the tree

Ngóh jyuh hái kénih ūkkéi deuimihh

(lit. I live at her home opposite)

I live opposite her (home)

douh 'there' serves colloquially as a localizer in this pattern:

A-Mā hái tēng douh

Mum's in the living room

Dī séung hái ngóh douh

The pictures are with me/at my place

While this pattern with two separate expressions of location may appear redundant, note that **douh** (or another localizer in its place) is required here:

Kéuihdeih hái ga chē douh

They're in the car

(not * **Kéuihdeih hái ga chē**)

Dī jīlū hái dihnlóuh douh

The data are in the computer

(not * **Dī jīlū hái dihnlóuh**)

With **jīgān** 'between', **tùhng** is used to join the two noun phrases concerned, in the pattern **X tùhng Y jīgān**:

Ngóh tùhng kénih jīgān móuh saai gámchihng

(lit. I and him between haven't all feeling)

There's no feeling left between us

Chihoggám tùhng léihji jīgān hóu làahn syúnjaahk

(lit. emotion and rationality between very hard to choose)

It's difficult to choose between emotion and rationality

- (iii) A demonstrative form or localizer followed by the existential **yáuh** (or its negative counterpart **móuh**: Unit 6) or another verb:

Nídouh yáuh hóu dōsailouhjái

There're many children here

Gódouh móuh yáuh-wihng-chih

There's no swimming pool there

Yahpbihh yáuh hóu dōyéh

There are lots of things inside

Hahbihh móuh chāntēng

Downstairs there's no restaurant

Chéutbihh lohk-gán yuh

It's raining outside

Again a noun phrase can be added before the localizer:

Daaihhohek léuihmihn yáuh sām go tòuh-syū-gwán
There are three libraries in the university

Gān fóng jūnggān yáuh go gongkàhn
There's a piano in the middle of the room

Movement and direction

Movement towards a point in space may be expressed by **heung**:

Léih yinggōi heung nībihn hàahng You should walk this way
(or **Léih yinggōi hàahng nībihn**)
Mhóu heung góbihn mohng Don't look in that direction
(or **Mhóu mohng góbihn**)

To express a starting point in time or space, **yàuh** is used as follows:

Ngóh gāmyaht yàuh baat dím hóichí séuhng-tòhtng
(lit. I today from eight o'clock beginning attended lessons)
Today I had classes from eight o'clock onwards

Yàuh Tòihwān làih Hēunggóng yiu yāt go jūngtòuh fēigēi
(lit. from Taiwan coming to Hong Kong needs one hour's plane)
It's an hour's flight from Taiwan to Hong Kong

Yàuh nīdohu heui Syutlèih géi yáuh a?
(lit. from here go to Sydney how far)
How far is it from here to Sydney?

Note that the prepositional phrase comes before the verb.

yàuh is also used together with **dou** indicating the end point of a journey in time or space:

Ngóhdeih yàuh gām jīu dāng dou yìhā
We've been waiting from this morning till now

Yàuh dasihhohek dou ùkkéi yiu bun go jūng
It takes half an hour to get from the university to home

Kéuih yàuh sui dou daaih dōu haih gám ge
He's always been like this (lit. from small to big)

gīng 'via' introduces an intermediate step between the starting point and end point:

Ngóhdeih gīng Dūnggīng heui Sāam Fàahn Sīh

(lit. we pass Tokyo go to San Francisco)

We're going to San Francisco via Tokyo

Léih hóiyh yàh Hēunggóng dóu gīng seuhdóuh dóu ùkkéi

(lit. you can from Hong Kong island pass the tunnel arrive home)

You can go home from Hong Kong island via the tunnel

Reflecting the intermediate step in a journey, the phrase with **gīng** 'via' typically comes in the middle of the sentence, before the destination.

lèih is used to indicate distance from a location:

Yíyún lèih nīdóuh géi yúhn a?

(lit. hospital from here how far)

How far is the hospital from here?

Ngóh ùkkéi lèih gēichéuhng yíksahp fānjūng

(lit. my home from the airport twenty minutes)

My home is twenty minutes from the airport

Note that a verb is not needed here.

Exercise 13.1

Express the location for each of the following using **lái** and a localizer in the spaces:

Example: **Dī fā hái fājēun yāhpóhn** The flowers are inside the vase

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | Hohksāang _____ tóng _____ | The students are inside the room |
| 2 | Jek māau _____ tóí _____ | The cat is on the table |
| 3 | Go jámtàuh _____ chòhng _____ | The pillow is on the bed |
| 4 | Jī bat _____ háp _____ | The pen is inside the box |
| 5 | Bún syū _____ dag _____ | The book is under the chair |
| 6 | Go jūng _____ chēuhng _____ | The clock is on the wall |
| 7 | Bá jē _____ mùhn _____ | The umbrella is behind the door |
| 8 | Dī séung _____ séungbóu _____ | The photos are inside the photo album |
| 9 | Pō syuh _____ gāan ùk _____ | The tree is in front of the house |
| 10 | Dībnsihgēi _____ syūgwaih _____ | The television is beside the book-case |

Exercise 13.2

Express the following in Cantonese:

- 1 behind the wall (**chènuk**)
- 2 on top of the bookcase (**syūgwaih**)
- 3 opposite the bank (**ngàhkhòung**)
- 4 in the middle of the road (**máhlouh**)
- 5 between the park (**gūngyún**) and the petrol station (**yàuh jaahm**)
- 6 sitting (**chók**) beside you
- 7 inside the box (**háp**)
- 8 outside the classroom (**hàunfóng**)
- 9 in front of the mirror (**geng**)
- 10 below the table (**tóih**)
- 11 towards this direction (**tóngheung**)
- 12 from morning (**jū**) to evening (**máahn**)

Exercise 13.3

Say what there is at the following locations in your home:

- 1 On the table: **tóih senhgmihn** _____
- 2 On the wall: **chènuk senhgmihn** _____
- 3 In the kitchen: **chynbfóng yahpbihn** _____
- 4 Inside the living room: **haak-téng léuimihn** _____
- 5 In the closet: **yīgwaik yahpbihn** _____
- 6 Under the bed: **chòhng hahmihn** _____
- 7 Under the chair: **dang hahbihn** _____
- 8 On the bookcase: **syūgwaih senhgmihn** _____
- 9 In the bathroom: **sáisáu-gaan yahpbihn** _____
- 10 In the study: **syūfóng yahpbihn** _____

Exercise 13.4

Describe the following journeys:

Example: from home to school: **yàuh ūkkéi heui hohkhaauh**

- 1 from here to the hospital (**yīyún**)
- 2 from the library (**tòuh-syū-gwún**) to the canteen (**faahn-tòhng**)
- 3 from the ground floor (**deih-há**) to the eighth floor (**baat láu**)
- 4 towards Kowloon (**Gáulòung**)

-
- 5 to Tokyo (**Dōnggēng**) via Taipei (**Tàibēik**)
 - 6 from Hong Kong to London (**Lènhndēnn**) via Bangkok (**Mashn-gūk**)
 - 7 from the study (**syūfóng**) to the kitchen (**chyàhfóng**)
 - 8 from the first time (**daih yāt chí**) until now (**yihgā**)
 - 9 from the airport (**gēichènhng**) to home (**ākkéi**)
 - 10 from the beginning (**tānh**) to the end (**méih**)

UNIT FOURTEEN

Negation

To express negation, Cantonese uses negative words that all begin with the nasal consonant **m** and have low-register tones:

negative word	used with:
m̀h not	adjectives, verbs referring to the present
móuh have not	nouns, verbs referring to the past
meih not yet	verbs
mhaih is not	sentences
m- un-	antonyms of adjectives and verbs

m̀h is used to negate:

(i) Most adjectives:

Ní gihn sāam m̀h pèhng ga	This shirt is not cheap
Dí jìh m̀h chingchó	The writing is not clear
Ngóh gīngyihm m̀h gau	My experience is not sufficient (lit. enough)

(ii) Verbs referring to the present:

Ngóh gāmyaht m̀h fāan-hohk	I'm not going to school today
Kéuihdeih m̀h sāu yihn-gām	They do not accept cash
Gūngsī jaahmsih m̀h chéng yàhn	The company is not hiring anyone right now

móuh is the negative form of **yáuh** (Unit 6), used in two main ways:

(i) As a main verb

Kéuih móuh làahm-pàhngyáuh ge	She doesn't have a boyfriend
--------------------------------------	------------------------------

Ngóhdeih yìhgā móuh gūngyàhn	We don't have a (domestic) helper now
Ngóh móuh leng sáam jeuk	I have no nice clothes to wear

(11) As an auxiliary verb.

Ngóh gāmyaht móuh gin dóu kéuih a	I haven't seen her today
Kéuih móuh làih hōi-wúi	He didn't come to the meeting
Kéuihdeih móuh tungjī ngóhdeih	They didn't inform us

móuh used in this way serves as the negative counterpart to **jó** (Unit 18), as can be seen in pairs like the following:

a	Ngóh kàhmyaht máaih-jó chōi	I bought vegetables yesterday
b	Ngóh kàhmyaht móuh máaih chōi	I didn't buy (any) vegetables yesterday
a	Gūngsī chéng-jó kéuih	The company has hired him
b	Gūngsī móuh chéng kéuih	The company has not hired him

meih as an auxiliary has the specific meaning 'not yet':

Ngóhdeih juhng meih bām ūk	We haven't moved house yet
Lóuhbáan meih fān làih	The boss hasn't come in yet
Jaahmsih meih yáuh sūsik	So far there hasn't been any news

Attached to the end of a statement, **meih** makes a special form of question, typically with **jó** or **gwo** (see Unit 18):

Léih jōuh-jó gūngfō meih a?
Have you done your homework (yet)?

Léih heui-gwo Hóiyèuhng Gūngyán meih a?
Have you ever been to Ocean Park?

mhaih 'it's not' is the negative form of the verb **haih** 'to be'. It is used in negating adjectives modified by an adverb (see Unit 9):

mhaih hóu leng	not very pretty
mhaih géi gūngpìhng	not quite fair
Ngóhdeih mhaih gam suhk	We're not that familiar (with each other)

Antonyms formed with negation

Antonyms of many adjectives (and some verbs) can be formed by adding a prefix **m-**:

hōisām	happy	→	mhōisām	unhappy
chīngchó	clear	→	mchīngchó	unclear
gūngpīhng	fair	→	mgūngpīhng	unfair
tūhngyi	agree	→	mtūhngyi	disagree

Some of these negative forms carry a meaning related to that of the underlying verb or adjective, but not simply its opposite:

gín	see	→	mgín	lose
geidāk	remember	→	mgeidāk	forget
tūhng	same	→	mtūhng	different
dākhàahn	at leisure	→	mdākhàahn	busy
syūfuhk	comfortable	→	msyūfuhk	unwell, sick

All such antonyms can be modified by **hóu** or other adverbs:

Kéulh hóu mjūngyi léih ge tǎihyih
She really dislikes your proposal

Gám yéung deui ngóh taai mgūngpīhng
(lit. this way towards me too unfair)
This is too unfair to me

A few such words exist in the negative form, i.e. they are inherently negative; without the prefix **m-**, they do not occur in an affirmative statement:

mhóuyisi	embarrassed
mfahnhei	discontented
Kéulh gokdāk hóu mhóuyisi (but not *Kéulh gokdāk hóu hóuyisi)	She feels very embarrassed
Ngóh gokdāk hóu mfahnhei (but not *Ngóh gokdāk hóu fahnhei)	I feel very discontented

Double negatives

Combinations of two negative forms are widely used to give a qualified or indirect positive meaning. A typical case is to use **mhaih** to deny a negative statement.

Ngóh mhaih m̃h seun léih	It's not that I don't believe you
Mhaih m̃hóláhg ge	It's not impossible
Ngóhdeih mhaih móuh h̃hmohng	We're not without hope (i.e. we still have a chance)

Another case involves negating both the main verb and an auxiliary (see Unit 20):

Kéuih m̃h wúih m̃h fāan làih	He won't fail to come back
Gám yéung m̃h wúih m̃gūngp̃hng	That would not be unfair
Léih m̃h hóyih m̃h béi chin	You cannot choose not to pay (i.e. you have to pay)

Exercise 14.1

Put these statements in the negative by using **móuh** or **mhaih**:

- Kéuih ūkkéi yáuh mahntàih**
His family has problems
- Ngóhdeih hóu guih**
We're very tired
- Ngóh sīng-jó-jīk**
I got promoted
- Kéuih gihn sām hóu gwai**
Her dress is very expensive
- Ngóh tauhsin síh-jó yeuhk**
I have taken the medicine just now
- Yisāng heui-jó douh-ga**
The doctor has gone on holiday
- Lóuhbáan hóu lāu**
The boss is very angry
- Dī hohksāang yáuh séuhng-móhng**
The students have got on the Internet
- Dī hohksāang hóu kàhnlihk**
The students are very diligent
- Gó tou hei taai ch̃euhug**
That film is too long

Exercise 14.2

Show your disagreement with the following negative statements by providing the affirmative counterparts

Example: **Léih móuh sìhgaan** You have no time → **Ngóh yáuh sìhgaan (a)** I do have time (the particle **a** serves to soften the force of the disagreement, see Unit 25)

- 1 **Sìhk hóisín m̀h gwai**
Eating seafood is not expensive
- 2 **Wòhng Sāang m̀h chéng kéuih**
Mr Wong is not hiring her
- 3 **Léih móuh duhk-gwo Faatmán**
You haven't studied French
- 4 **Kéuihdeih meih gít-fán**
They're not married
- 5 **Léih móuh bou-méng**
You haven't applied
- 6 **Dí háausih tàihmuhk m̀hah hóu làahn**
The exam questions are not very hard
- 7 **Gān tóng m̀h gònjehug**
The room is not tidy
- 8 **Kéuih yìhgā mdákhàahn**
He's busy now
- 9 **Gāmyaht móuh tòhng**
There are no lessons today
- 10 **Ngóhdeih meih sìhk-gwo sèh-gāng**
We've never eaten snake soup

Exercise 14.3

Create antonyms based on the following adjectives and verbs, translate and pronounce them:

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------|---------------------|------------|
| 1 sānsin | fresh | 6 jūngyi | like |
| 2 síusām | careful | 7 m̀hngbaahk | understand |
| 3 hóuchóí | lucky | 8 tùhngyi | agree |
| 4 gòuhing | glad | 9 yánséung | appreciate |
| 5 gìnhong | healthy | 10 làuhshām | attentive |

† Exercise 14.4

A Create a double negative based on the sentence provided:

Example: Ngóh m̄h séung heui I don't want to go → Ngóh m̄hah
m̄h séung heui

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Kéuih m̄oh seunsām | She lacks confidence |
| 2 Kéuih góng ge yéh m̄oh donhléih | What he says is unreasonable |
| 3 Léih gājē m̄h wáih bōng léih | Your sister won't help you |
| 4 Ngóhdeih m̄h gau chín | We don't have enough money |
| 5 Léih gāmyaht m̄hkhāahn | You're busy today |

B Use a double negative to express the following indirectly:

Example: Léih yātdihng yiu seun kéuih You must believe him →
Léih m̄h hóyh m̄h seun kéuih

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1 Ngóhdeih t̄hngyi | We agree |
| 2 Ngóhdeih yiu jáu | We must leave |
| 3 Gūngsī háng gā yàhn-gūng | The company is willing to raise salaries |
| 4 Ngóh wúth geidāk | I'll remember |
| 5 Léih máaih dāk hét | You can afford it |

UNIT FIFTEEN

Verbs of motion: **heui** and **laih**

The verbs **heui** 'go' and **laih** (or **lèih**) 'come' are used as follows:

(i) By themselves as main verbs:

Ngóhdeih yáitchàih heui lā	Let's go together
Kéuih fíngyaht m̀h làih la	She's not coming tomorrow

Both can be followed directly by a place name or other expression of the destination, without a preposition as in English:

Ngóh yāt-yuht heui Méihgwok	I'm going to America in January
Ngóhdeih yihgā heui fóchéjaahm	We're going to the railway station now
Kéuihdeih m̀h làih Yinggwok	They're not coming to England
Léih géisih làih ngóh úkkéi a?	When are you coming to my place?

They can also take a verb phrase to show the purpose of the journey:

heui (gwóng-chèuhng) yám-chàh	Go (to the shopping centre) for dim sum (<i>lit.</i> to drink tea)
laih (nídouh) tái hei	Come (here) to see a film

(ii) Together with directional verbs:

yahp heui	go in	yahp làih	come in
chéut heui	go out	chéut làih	come out
séuhng heui	go up	séuhng làih	come up
lohk heui	go down	lohk làih	come down
gwo heui	go over	gwo làih	come over
faan heui	go back	faan làih	come back

These combinations are used in the same way as the simple verbs, for example

Ngóh séuhng heui Bākgāng hōi-wái
(lit. I ascend go Beijing hold meeting)
I'm going up to Beijing for a meeting

Ngóhdeih lohk heui síhk-faahn lā
(lit. we descend go eat rice)
Let's go down and eat

Léih géisih gwo làih taam ngóh a?
(lit. you when over come visit me)
When are you coming over to visit me?

A third verb may be added before the directional verb to express the manner of movement, resulting in a sequence of three verbs: (manner – direction – come/go):

fēi yáhp làih	fly in	fēi chéut heui	fly out
dít lohk làih	come falling down	dít lohk heui	go falling down
tiu séuhng làih	jump up (here)	tiu séuhng heui	jump up (there)
hàahng fān làih	walk back (here)	hàahng gwo heui	walk over (there)

When used with a transitive verb, the directional verb and **heui/làih** follow the object:

Ngóhdeih séung daai dī sán tūhngsìh yáhp làih
(lit. we wish to bring some new colleagues in come)
We'd like to bring in some new colleagues

Ngóh líng dī hàhngléih séuhng làih sīn
(lit. I carry the luggage up come first)
I'll bring the luggage up first

Mgōi léih daib dī sung gwo làih
(lit. please you pass the food over come)
Could you pass the dishes over, please

Aspect markers like **jó** and **gám** (Units 18–19) appear after the first verb of the sequence:

Kéuhdeih chéut-jó heui hóu loih la	They've been out for a long time
Lóuhbáan fān-gán làih ge la	The boss is on his way (<i>lu</i> coming) back
Jek jeukjái fēi-jó yahp làih chühfóng	The bird has flown into the kitchen
Dī séui làuh-gán lohk heui hahmih	The water is flowing downwards

These sequences of verbs are known as serial verb constructions. One such pattern, using both **laih** and **heui**, uses four verbs in a row.

hàahng làih hàahng heui	walk to and fro
fēi làih fēi heui	fly back and forth
lám làih lám heui	think it over and over
sí làih sí heui	try and try again

Directional verbs are also used as verbs in their own right, with a place expression as their object. This pattern includes a number of useful set phrases:

séuhng/lohk chē	get on/off a car, bus, etc.
séuhng/lohk sáan	go up/down a hill
yahp/chéut gíng	enter/leave a country (at the border)
yahp/chéut yún	enter/leave hospital
gwo máhlouh	cross the road
gwo hói	cross the sea, harbour, etc.
fān ōkkéi	return home
fān gūng	go (<i>lit.</i> return) to work

Exercise 15.1

Expand the sentence given by adding a directional verb:

Example: **heui Hēunggóng** go to Hong Kong → **gwo heui Hēunggóng**
go over to Hong Kong/**fān heui Hēunggóng** go back to Hong Kong

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Laih ngók ōkkéi | come to my place |
| 2 Heui hohkhaauh | go to school |
| 3 Heui làuhseuhng | go upstairs |
| 4 Laih Yīngwok | come to England |
| 5 Heui séjhlàuh | go to the office |
| 6 Laih tái-háh | come and take a look |
| 7 Laih taam ngóhdeih | come to visit us |
| 8 Heui hoi-wúi | go to a meeting |

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--------------|
| 9 | Làih sikh-faahn | come and eat |
| 10 | Heui jouh-yéh | go to work |

Exercise 15.2

Add a suitable object to the verb sequences given to show the destination

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | Ngóh tìngyaht heui _____ | I'm going tomorrow |
| 2 | Léih làih _____ sikh-faahn | Come to eat |
| 3 | Ngóh gwo heui _____ wán yàhn | I'm going over to look for someone |
| 4 | Léih dákhaahn séuhng làih _____
chóh | Come up for a visit (<i>lit. to sit</i>)
when you're free |
| 5 | Ngóhdeih yiu fēi fāan heui _____ | We have to fly back |
| 6 | Go léuihjáí jáu chēut heui _____ | The girl ran out |
| 7 | Ngóh dī chānchik fāan làih _____
doh-ga | My relatives are coming back for a
holiday |
| 8 | Léih hóyih lohk heui _____
máaih yéh | You can go down to do some
shopping |
| 9 | Ngóh jikhāak yahp heui _____
wuhm sūon | I'm going in to change right away |
| 10 | Ngóh tùhngsih gwo làih _____
king-gái | My colleague is coming over to
chat |

Exercise 15.3

Fill in the blanks according to the translation:

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | _____ Gáulùhng | Go over to Kowloon |
| 2 | _____ ngóh gāan fóng | Come into my room |
| 3 | _____ Hēunggóng | Come down to Hong Kong (e.g.
from mainland China) |
| 4 | _____ Bākging | Go up to Beijing |
| 5 | _____ haak-tēng | Go out to the living room |
| 6 | _____ ūkkéi | Come back home |
| 7 | Yàuh sahph láu dīt _____ | Fall down from the tenth floor |
| 8 | Tiu _____ ga fóchě | Jump onto the train |
| 9 | Hàahng _____ syūfóng | Walk into the study |
| 10 | Fēi _____ Oujāu | Fly back to Australia |

† Exercise 15.4

Add an aspect marker (*jó* or *gám*; see Units 18–19) in the appropriate place according to the English translation:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Ga fochē fāan làih | The lorry is coming back |
| 2 Dī seun gei heui Méihgwok | The letters have been sent to the United States |
| 3 Dī gúpiu sīng séuhng heui gōu wáí | The shares have risen to a high |
| 4 Kéuih hái fóng hàahng chéut làih | He's coming out of his room |
| 5 Kéuihdeih pàh séuhng làih
sāandéng | They're climbing up the top of the mountain |
| 6 Bún syū dīt lohk heui deihhá | The book has fallen down onto the floor |
| 7 Go kàhm bün gwo heui deuimihh | The piano has been moved to the opposite side |
| 8 Ga chē hoi yahp làih tūng-chē-
chèuhng | The car is driving into the car park |
| 9 Kéuih hàahng chéut heui gāi
douh | She's walking out onto the street |
| 10 Kéuihdeih bün lohk heui yih láu | They're moving down to the second floor |

UNIT SIXTEEN

Verbs of giving: **béi**

béi is an important verb used both on its own as a verb meaning 'give' and together with other verbs of giving. The verb **béi** takes two objects, the direct object (representing what is given) followed by the indirect object (representing the person to whom something is given):

Kéuih béi-jó yāt haak mǎn ngóh
(lit. she gave one hundred dollars me)
She gave me a hundred dollars

Ngóh béi-jó tuih sósih ngóh taaitáai
(lit. I gave the key my wife)
I gave my wife the key

Béi gǎn chái ngóh ǎ
(lit. give catty vegetables me)
Give me a catty of vegetables, please

Léih béi dī mǎn kéuih lá!
(lit. you give some face (to) her)
Show her some respect!

Note that the order of the two objects here is the reverse of that in English as well as that in Mandarin.

With other verbs of giving such as **gei** 'send' and **wàahn** 'return', **béi** 'to' is used to introduce the indirect object:

Ngóh pǎhngyǎnh gei-jó jēung kǎat béi ngóh
My friend sent me a card

Ngóh yíngīng wàahn-jó chún béi léih
I've already returned the money to you

Kéuih lóuhgíng lánh-jó gān uk bái kéuih
Her husband left her the house

Yáuh go yáuh-chín-lóu gyū-jó hóu dō chún bái daaih-hohk
A rich man donated a lot of money to the university

Note here the verb **sung** which is used in this pattern to mean 'give' in the sense of giving presents:

Dī tūhngsih sung-jó dī fā bái kéuih
Her colleagues sent her some flowers

Kéuih lính-lính sung sǎngyaht láihmaht bái ngóh go jái
She gives my son a birthday present every year

Nī jek gaaijǐ sung bái léih ge!
This ring is (a present) for you

A third verb may be added to the construction to indicate the purpose for which the object will be used:

Kéuih wúih gei dī mǎn-gín bái léih chím-ruéng
She will send the documents for you to sign

Go hohksǎang chyúhnjǎn-jó pín mǎhnjéung bái ngóh tái
The student faxed an article for me to read

Kéuih yiu jyú-faahn bái úkkéi-yàhn sǐhk
She has to cook for her family (to eat)

bái and permission

bái can also indicate permission (allowing, letting someone do something):

Lóuhsǐ bái ngóhdeih jóu dī jáu	The teacher let us leave early
Ngóh bái léih yuhng ngóh go dǐhnlóuh	I'll let you use my computer
Mhóu bái yáuh jī a	Don't let anyone know

Other verbs with two objects

A number of other verbs can take two objects, such as **gaan** (teach), **mahn** (ask). Here the word order is different, with the indirect object coming first:

Kéuih gaa-gwo hún dō yàhn gongkàhn
She has taught a lot of people the piano

Ngóh jūngyi maha hohksāang mahntàih
I like to ask students questions

A similar pattern appears with verbs of deprivation such as **faht** (fine) and **tāu** (steal) or **chéung** (rob):

Gūngsī faht ngóhdeih géi baak mǎn
The company fined us a few hundred dollars

Ngóh yèhng-jó kéuih hóu dō chún
I won a lot of money from him

Yáuh go cháak tǎu-jó ngóh sāam bún syǎ
A thief has stolen three books from me

Kàhm máahn yáuh yàhn chéung kéuih yéh
Last night someone robbed things from him

The verb **je** when used in this pattern can be ambiguous, meaning either 'lend' or 'borrow' according to the context:

Ngóh je-jó kéuih yǎt baak mǎn
I borrowed \$100 from him
or I lent him \$100

Ngóh gǎjē je-jó ngóh géi tǐnh kwàhn
My sister has borrowed a few dresses from me
or My sister has lent me a few dresses

To make the meaning clear, the preposition **tǎhng** or **heung** can be used to mean 'borrow from':

Ngóh tǎhng kéuih jē-jó yǎt baak mǎn I borrowed \$100 from him
or **Ngóh heung kéuih jē-jó yǎt baak mǎn**

By contrast, using **béi** to introduce the indirect object gives the meaning 'lend':

Ngóh je-jó yǎt baak mǎn béi kéuih I lent him \$100
Ngóh gǎjē je-jó géi tǐnh kwàhn béi ngóh My sister has lent me a few dresses

Exercise 16.1

Add an indirect object to show who the object is given to:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 Ngóh yiu béi chin | I have to pay (money) |
| 2 Léih yiu wáahm syū | You need to return some books |
| 3 Ngóh séung sung láihmaht | I want to give a present |
| 4 Ngóh heui gei seun | I'm going to send a letter |
| 5 Faai di dá-dihnwá | Hurry up and call (telephone) |
| 6 Léih tīngyaht gāau gūngfo | Hand in your homework tomorrow |
| 7 Mgoi léih làuh sung | Please leave some food (for someone to eat) |
| 8 Ngóh sèhgyaht máaih sām | I'm always buying clothes (for someone to wear) |
| 9 Ngóh hóyih gāam tou bei | I can pick a film (for someone to watch) |
| 10 Ngóh séung dīm gō | I'd like to request a song (for someone to listen to) |

Exercise 16.2

Translate the following sentences using appropriate verbs of giving:

- 1 He gave me some perfume (**dī hēungséui**)
- 2 The doctor (**yisāng**) gave me some medicine (**dī yeuhk**)
- 3 I'm going to return the documents (**dī mǎhn-gín**) to you
- 4 The boss (**lóuhbáan**) donated a lot of money to the church (**gāauwúí**)
- 5 He sent his family (**sikéi-yáhn**) a letter (**fūng seun**)
- 6 I lent him a pencil (**jī yàhnbat**)
- 7 Please give him face (respect: **mín**)
- 8 You must give me back the key (**tóuh sósìh**)
- 9 He wants to borrow two books (**léuhng bún syū**) from me
- 10 The lecturer (**go góngsi**) gave us some homework (**gūngfo**) to do

Exercise 16.3

Add an indirect object to show the recipient of the action:

- Example. Ngóh sik gāau gonghàhm I know how to teach the piano
 › Ngóh sik gāau daaih-yáhn gonghàhm I know how to teach adults the piano

-
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih juhng yiu bái chún | We still have to pay (money) |
| 2 Ngóh gājē je-jó hóu dō sām | My sister lent a lot of clothes |
| 3 Gó go yàhn sèhngyaht tū yéh | That person is always stealing things |
| 4 Yáuh yàhn chéung-jó hóu dō chún | Somebody has stolen a lot of money |
| 5 Ngóh heui je géi bún syū | I'm going to borrow a few books |
| 6 Kéuih séung mahn géi yehng yéh | She wants to ask a few things |
| 7 Ngóh go pàhngyáuh gōu Yīngmán | My friend teaches English |
| 8 Jīngfú wáih faht chún ge | The government will impose a fine |

UNIT SEVENTEEN

Verbs and particles

The Cantonese verb combines with a rich, versatile set of particles (also known as verbal complements). The resulting combinations often resemble those known as verb-particle constructions (or phrasal verbs) in English, as in the following cases:

tiu héi	jump up	tiu gwo	jump over
bái dái	put down	bái fān	put back

The particles may indicate the state of an object as the result of an action, or different phases of an action (beginning, continuing or ending). According to the functions they serve, they can be divided into the following categories:

1 Directional particles, indicating the direction of movement or action:

yahp in	máaih buy + yahp → máaih yahp	buy in, acquire
chēut out	gei send + chēut → gei chēut	send out
héi up	gwa hang + héi → gwa héi	hang up (clothes, etc.)
dái down	fong put + dái → fong dái	put down
fān back	ló bring + fān → ló fān	bring back
gwo over, past	ging pass + gwo → ging gwo	pass by
hói away	hàahng walk + hói → hàahng hói	walk away, step out
màaih closer	hàahng walk + màaih → hàahng màaih	come closer

Note that some of these items (**yahp**, **chēut**, **fān** and **gwo**) are the same as the directional verbs introduced in Unit 15. The meaning of the combinations is often predictable, as in the above examples, but it can also be figurative or quite idiomatic as in the following cases:

hái	up	Lóuhbáan hóm tái hái kéuih The boss has a high opinion of him Ngóh jhng meih jhng hái gíngfo I haven't finished my homework
fān	back	Kéuih yíngā jhng fān gíngchaat He's gone back to being a policeman Ngóh séung máaih fān di leng sām I want to buy myself some nice clothes
gwo	over	Léih jei hók sé gwo pín mán You'd better rewrite (write over) the essay Ngóh bah chí sìn túng léih wáan gwo I'll play with you again next time

2 Resultative particles, describing the extent or consequences of an action:

báu	full up	sihk → sihk báu	eat + báu eat one's full share
cho	wrongly	gáan → gáan cho	choose + cho make the wrong choice
díhm	conclusively	gáu → gáu díhm	manage + díhm deal with
díhng	ready	lám → lám díhng	think + díhng think in advance
dóu	accomplish	sáu → sáu dóu	collect + dóu receive
hau	arrive	heu → heu dou	go + dou arrive
hók	complete	jhng → jhng hók	do + hók finish up (dong)
jíhng	remain	sihk → sihk jíhng	eat + jíhng leave behind (after eating)
míhng	clear	sé → sé míhng	write + míhng put in writing
séi	to death	muhn → muhn séi	bored + séi (be) bore(d) to death
sèhng	succeed	jhng → jhng sèhng	do + sèhng complete (a deal, etc.)
wauh	bad, broken	gau → gau wauh	teach + wauh lead astray
yùhn	to the end	tái → tái yùhn	read + yùhn finish reading

Verbs of perception

An important sub-type of verb + particle construction involves verbs of perception. In these combinations, a verb denoting some mode of perception combines with the particle **dóu** to indicate successful perception of an object.

tēng	listen	→ tēng dóu	hear
tái	look, watch, read	→ tái dóu	see
gìn	see, meet	→ gìn dóu	see, notice
wán	seek, look for	→ wán dóu	find
màhn	smell	→ màhn dóu	smell (something)
lám	think (about)	→ lám dóu	think of (a problem, solution, etc.)
gám gok	feeling	→ gok dóu, gám gok dóu	feel (something)

The simple verbs on the left describe activities, the combinations with **dóu** successful perception:

tēng gō	listen to songs	tēng dóu sēng	hear a noise
tái sǎnmán	watch the news	tái dóu hongou	see a report
lám baahnfat	(try to) think of a way		
lám dóu go baahnfat	think of a way		

Potential constructions

Verb-particle combinations can be separated by **mh** and **dāk** in constructions which express inability and potential respectively:

heui mh dóu	cannot get there
heui dāk dóu	can get there
tái mh dóu	cannot see
tái (dāk) dóu	can see
tēng mh chéut	cannot tell
tēng dāk chéut	can tell (by listening)
tēng mh mihng	cannot understand
tēng dāk mihng	can understand (what one hears)

Some examples:

Ngóhdeih tái mh dóu go dīhnyíng mihngsūng
We could not see the film star

Ngóh téng dāk mihng léih ge Gwóngdùng-wá
I can understand your Cantonese

Ngóh téng dāk chéut léih haih Méihgwokyàhn
I can tell (by listening) that you're American

Ngóh lám m̀h héi kéuih go Yingmàhn méng
I cannot think of his English name

Such combinations often have idiomatic meanings:

seun m̀h gwo	cannot trust	seun dāk gwo	can trust
máaih m̀h héi	cannot afford	máaih dāk héi	can afford
ding m̀h seuhn	cannot stand	ding dāk seuhn	can stand
gón m̀h chít	cannot make it (in time)	gón dāk chít	can make it (in time)

Exercise 17.1

Add a particle after the verb from the list provided:

(cho, dái, dou, dóu, fāan, gwo, hōi, yùhn)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 tái _____ ga chē | see the car |
| 2 báai _____ gihh sām | put the dress down |
| 3 ló _____ dī seun | bring back the mail (letters) |
| 4 gīng _____ yīyún | pass by the hospital |
| 5 lám _____ baahnfaat | think of a solution |
| 6 tái _____ boují | finish reading the newspaper |
| 7 yihng _____ yàhn | misrecognize someone |
| 8 jáu _____ | go away |
| 9 sām _____ chún | receive money |
| 10 heui _____ gūngsī | arrive at the office |

Exercise 17.2

Translate the following using verbs of perception:

- He often listens to stories (gúji)
- I hear rumours (yíngyíh)
- He's already thought of the answer (go daahp-on)
- I saw an advertisement (go gwónggou)

- 5 You can feel the pressure (**ngaatfihk**)
- 6 I smell smoke (**yimmeih**)
- 7 She likes to read novels (**sinsyut**)
- 8 She doesn't like watching films (**hei**)

Exercise 17.3

Express the following situations using **mih** and the particle **dóu**:

Example: You cannot see (your name) → **Ngóh tái mih dóu (ngóh go méng)**

- 1 You did not receive her letter (**kéuih fūng seun**)
- 2 You cannot buy the cinema ticket (**hei fēi**)
- 3 You could not see the sign (**go páai**)
- 4 You cannot smell the food (**dī sung**)
- 5 You cannot hear the aeroplanes (**fēigēi sēng**)
- 6 You cannot think of how to answer (**dím daap**)
- 7 You cannot remember (**gei**) so many names (**gam dô méng**)
- 8 You cannot eat so much ice cream (**gam dô syutgōu**)
- 9 You cannot find (**wán**) a letter (**fūng seun**)
- 10 Your friend cannot get (**heui**) to Shatin

Exercise 17.4

Use the potential **dāk** to contradict the following statements:

Example: **Ngóhdeih heui mih dóu Bālàih** We cannot get to Paris →
heui dāk dóu Yes we can (Note that this response is sufficient:
 there is no need to repeat the subject or object.)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Kéuih bēi mih dóu ōmchýàhn-gám ngóh | He can't give me a sense of security |
| 2 Ngóh gáau mih dihm léutug go sailouh | I can't deal with two kids |
| 3 Gām máahn tái mih dóu sīng-sīng | We can't see the stars tonight |
| 4 Nī dāan sāangyi jōuh mih sēhng | We cannot complete the deal |
| 5 Kéuihdeih seun mih gwo ga | They can't be trusted |
| 6 Léih saht máaih mih héi | I bet you can't afford it |
| 7 Gām chí ngóhdeih jōuh mih chí | This time we won't manage it in time |
| 8 Léih tēng mih mihng ngóh ge Jūngmán àh? | Can't you understand my Chinese? |

UNIT EIGHTEEN

Actions and events: **jó** and **gwo**

Cantonese is said to lack tense, in the sense that the form taken by the verb does not consistently indicate the location of events in time. We have already seen how adverbs can serve to indicate when events take place (Unit 11); in this unit we introduce the aspect markers **jó** and **gwo** which also play an important role here. Although it may be tempting to equate **jó** and/or **gwo** with past tense, the fact of referring to the past is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for their use. They are termed aspect markers because they are concerned with the way an action is viewed – as complete, or as ongoing as discussed in Unit 19 – rather than directly with time.

Perfective **jó**

A sentence can refer to the past merely by including an adverb such as **yíhchìuh** 'before' (Unit 11):

Ngóhdeih yíhchìuh hái Gānhádaaih jyun ge
We lived in Canada before

By adding the perfective suffix **jó** to the verb it is possible to refer to the same situation as a complete whole:

Ngóhdeih hái Gānhádaaih jyun-jó sāam lín
We lived in Canada for three years

In this case specifying the period of three years, now completed, calls for the suffix **jó**. Adverbs such as **yíhging** 'already', **ngāam-ngāam** 'just' and **tàuhsin** 'just now' also favour **jó**:

Kéuih yíhging kyutdihng-jó chihjik
He has already decided to resign

Kéuihdeih ngāam-ngāam lèih-jó-fān
They've just had a divorce

Ngóh tauhsin daap-jó léih ge mahutāih
I answered your question just now

Naturally this tends to place the action in the past. It also extends to a period of time up to and including the present:

Ngóh taaitāi gau-jó sāam linn Yíngmán
My wife has taught/has been teaching English for three years

Ngóh tái-jó bun yaht syū
I have been reading for half a day

Ngóh sailóu jow-jó gíngchaat hóu lóih
My brother has been a policeman for a long time

Experiential gwo

The 'experiential' meaning of **gwo** corresponds to one of the meanings of the present perfect in English – that something has happened at least once. Given a human subject, this is essentially the concept of experience, hence the grammatical term 'experiential' to describe this function. Typical cases are:

Léih yáuh-móuh sihk-gwo Góngsik sái chāan a?
Have you eaten Hong Kong-style western food?

Léih heui-gwo Taai-hūng Gwún meih a?
Have you been to the Space Museum?

Adverbs which call for **gwo** include **chàhnggīng** 'once' and **meih** 'not yet':

Kéuih chàhnggīng oi-gwo ngóh She once loved me
Ngóh meih yám-gwo nī jek jáu I've not drunk this wine before
(not * **Ngóh meih yám-jó nī jek jáu**)

jó versus gwo

jó and gwo may appear similar in meaning, both corresponding to the present perfect forms of the verb in English. Indeed there will be cases when either makes sense:

Ngóh tái-jó sām go yīsāng	I've (just) seen three doctors
Ngóh tái-gwo sām go yīsāng	I've seen three doctors (before)
Kéuih sé-jó yāt pīn mán	He's (just) written an article
Kéuih sé-gwo yāt pīn mán	He's written an article (before)
Kéuih jyuh-jó sām go yuht yīyún	He's been in hospital for three months (recently)
Kéuih jyuh-gwo sām go yuht yīyún	He's been in hospital for three months (once before)
Ngóh wán-jó léih géi chí	I've looked for you several times (recently)
Ngóh wán-gwo léih géi chí	I've looked for you several times (before)

In such cases, jó puts a focus on the result or current relevance of the action, while gwo makes it of less immediate relevance:

Ngóh máaih-jó nī jek pàaihjī
I've bought this brand (and still have it)

Ngóh máaih-gwo nī jek pàaihjī
I've bought this brand (before, in the past)

Kéuih heui-jó gēichèuhng
He's gone to the airport (and is still there or on his way)

Kéuih heui-gwo gēichèuhng
He's been to the airport (but is no longer there)

Questions with meih

Statements with either jó or gwo can be turned into yes/no questions by adding meih (see also Unit 23).

Léih sīk-jó dāng meih a?	Have you turned the light(s) off?
Léih si-gwo nī jūng hēungséui meih a?	Have you tried this perfume before?

Such questions are answered by the verb + **jó** or **gwo**:

- A: **Léih chūng-jó-lèuhng meih a?** Have you taken a bath yet?
 B: **Chūng-jó la/meih a** Yes/no
 A: **Léih si-gwo nī dī meih a?** Have you ever tried these?
 B: **Si-gwo la/meih (si-gwo) a** Yes/no

Negating jó and gwo

Because it suggests completion of an action, **jó** is not compatible with negation. The negative counterpart of **jó** is **móuh** (have not) or **meih** (not yet):

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Kéuih yingsihng-jó ngóh | He (has) promised me |
| Kéuih móuh yingsihng ngóh | He didn't promise me |
| (not * Kéuih móuh yingsihng-jó ngóh) | |
| Kéuih meih yingsihng ngóh | He hasn't promised me yet |
| (not * Kéuih meih yingsihng-jó ngóh) | |
| Ngóhdeih síhk-jó-faahn | We've had our dinner |
| Ngóhdeih meih síhk-faahn | We haven't had dinner yet |
| (not * Ngóhdeih meih síhk-jó-faahn) | |

Unlike **jó**, **gwo** can be negated either with **móuh** or **meih**:

- Ngóh móuh sǎu-gwo léih ge chún** I have not received your money
Kéuih meih joub-gwo sǎusenht She has not yet had an operation

Exercise 18.1

Choose **jó** or **gwo** to fill in the gaps:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Ngóh gin _____ kéuih ùkkéi yàhn | I've met his family before |
| 2 Ngóh tàuh-sín sái _____ tàuh | I've just washed my hair |
| 3 Kéuih gǎmjǐu síhk _____ jóuchāan la | He had breakfast this morning |
| 4 Ngóh tēng _____ nī sǎu gō | I've heard this song before |
| 5 Ngóh heui _____ yāt chí Bakgīng | I've been to Beijing once |
| 6 Ngóh bou _____ méng hohk yànhséni | I've applied for swimming lessons |
| 7 Kéuih yèhng _____ tàuh jéung | She's won the first prize! |
| 8 Kéuih meih háu _____ dǎih yāt mǐhng | She hasn't got first place in an exam before |
| 9 Kéuih meih mǎnǐh _____ sǎn chē | He hasn't bought a new car before |

- 10 Ngóh ngāam-ngāam maaiah _____ I just sold the car
ga chē

Exercise 18.2

Add **jó** or **gwo** to the following questions in accordance with the translation.

- 1 Léih lám _____ yihmàhn meih a? Have you ever considered emigrating?
- 2 Go bibbi fan _____ meih a? Has the baby gone to sleep yet?
- 3 Léih si _____ nī jek yeuhk meih a? Have you tried this medicine before?
- 4 Léih yeuk _____ kéuih meih a? Have you made an appointment with him yet?
- 5 Léih sanching _____ gó fahn gūng meih a? Have you applied for that job yet?
- 6 Ga chē johng _____ meih a? Has the car ever had an accident?
- 7 Bún syū chēutbāan _____ meih a? Has the book been published yet?
- 8 Léih cheung _____ nī sán gōmeih a? Have you sung this song before?
- 9 Léih gānjū tái _____ boujī meih a? Have you read the newspaper this morning?
- 10 Lóuhbāan fān _____ ūkkéi meih a? Has the boss gone home yet?

Exercise 18.3

Negate the following sentences (refer to Unit 14 if necessary):

Example: Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān They've got married: Kéuihdeih móuh git-fān (They have not got married) or Kéuihdeih meih git fān (They're not married yet)

- 1 Dī hohksāang jáu-jó The students have gone
- 2 Ngóh go jái heui-gwo Yínggwok My son has been to England
- 3 Kéuih ló-jó chēpānh She's got her driving licence
- 4 Ngóhdeih jouh-gwo jingfú gūng We've worked for the government before
- 5 Ngóh dehng-jó fóng I've reserved a room
- 6 Go heisyū fong-jó ga The secretary has taken a day off
- 7 Ngóh yám-gwo Chingdón bējáu I've drunk Tsingtao beer before
- 8 Ngóh tùhng kénih pāk-gwo-tō I've been on a date with him

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 9 | Dihnfai gā-jó ga | Electricity costs have gone up |
| 10 | Lóuhbáan laauh-gwo kéuih | The boss has scolded him before |

Exercise 18.4

Choose an appropriate adverb to add to each sentence from the list (a-f):

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------|----------|
| 1 | Kéuih meih si-gwo chih dou
She's never been late | a | yíngāng | already |
| 2 | Ngóhdeih hemi-gwo léih úkkéi
We've been to your house | b | ngāam-ngāam | just |
| 3 | Ngóh sinsāang fāan-jó séjhlāuh
My husband has gone to the office | c | chāhngāng | once |
| 4 | Kéuih sāang-jó go jái
She's had a child | d | yíhchih | before |
| 5 | Ngóh hásuleuih-gwo chihjik
I've considered resigning | e | jeuigahn | recently |
| 6 | Gāan jáulāuh sāan-jó mūhn
The restaurant has closed | f | chūhnglòih | never |

UNIT NINETEEN

Activities: **gán** and **jyuh**

The aspect markers **gán** and **jyuh** attached to verbs express ongoing actions.

1 Progressive **gán** and **háidouh**

The progressive suffix **-gán**, like the English progressive '-ing', is used for ongoing activities:

Kéuih yìhgā hōi-gán-wái She's having a meeting
Kéuihdeih léuhng go kīng-gán-gái The two of them are chatting

Unlike the English '-ing' in such cases, **gán** does not have to be present. Thus the same sentences shown above are also possible without **gán** (although a sentence particle may be needed in its place: see Unit 25):

Kéuih yìhgā hōi-wái wo She's having a meeting
Kéuihdeih léuhng go kīng-gái la The two of them are chatting

Although referring most often to the present, verbs with **gán** may apply to an activity in the past. In such cases there is typically a past time adverb present to make this clear (see Unit 11; note also the adverb **juhng** 'still'):

Gauh lín kéuih juhng duhk-gán jūnghohk
Last year she was still studying in secondary school

Kéuihdeih seuhng go yuht juhng paak-gán-tō, yìhgā yìhgung fān-jó-sáu la
Last month they were still dating, now they're already separated

Similarly, **gán** may be used in subordinate clauses referring to the past.

Ngóh duhk-gám sáubohk gójahsìh, kéuih yíngāng sīk ngóh
(lit. I studying primary school that time, he already knew me)
 When I was in primary school, she already knew me

Léih fan-gám-gaan gójahsìh, yáuh yàhn dá-dihnwá tàih
(lit. you sleeping that time, somebody telephoned come)
 Somebody called while you were sleeping

An alternative means of describing an ongoing action is by using **háidouh**, which literally means 'to be here/there':

Ngóh háidouh jouh gūngfo	I'm (here) doing homework
Léih háidouh dáng bīngō a?	Who are you waiting for?
Kéuihdeih háidouh aai-gāu	They're having an argument

Because of the literal meaning 'here', it is suitable where the activity is going on in a location close to the speaker. **háidouh** and **gám** can also be used together in expressing progressive meaning:

Kéuih háidouh jyú-gán-faahn	She's cooking
Lóuhbāan háidouh sé-gán-seun	The boss is writing letters

2 Continuous jyuh

jyuh added to a verb describes a continuous activity or state without change. It is associated with particular verbs, such as those denoting stationary situations:

Ga dihdāanchē jó-jyuh go chēutháu
 The motorbike is blocking the exit

Kéuih sèhngyaht jǎ-jyuh fahn bouji
 She's always holding a newspaper

Ngóh yaht-yaht deni-jyuh tǎhng-yéung yāt bāan yàhn
 I face the same bunch of people every day

Certain transitive verbs with **jyuh** indicate putting something in a state, as with **kám-jyuh** 'cover' and **bóng-jyuh** 'tie up':

Léih yiu yuhng go gōi kám-jyuh go wok
 You need to use the top to cover the wok

Kéuih yuhng dī hōn leng ge jí bāau-jyuh fahn láihmaht
She used some nice paper to wrap up the gift

Kéuih mónh haanhfaat bóng-jyuh kéuih lóuhgūng
There's no way she can tie up her husband (physically or metaphorically)

Note that verb + **jyuh** can mean something different from the simple verb by itself, such as **lám-jyuh** 'intend' vs. **lám** 'think', **tái-jyuh** 'watch over' vs. **tái** 'look, see':

Ngóh lám-jyuh chéng kéuihdeih sihk-faahn
I intend to invite them to dinner

Léih tái-jyuh nī léuhng go sailouhjai, mhóu bái kéuihdeih dá-gāu
Keep an eye on these two kids, (and) don't let them fight

A verb with **jyuh** can also be used to describe an action carried out simultaneously with another:

Kéuih móhng-jyuh ngóh sim
(lit. he watching me smiled)
He smiled (while looking) at me

Kéuih deui-jyuh ngóh haam
(lit. she facing me cried)
She cried at (while facing) me

Léih gān-jyuh ngóh hàahng
(lit. you following me walk)
Walk after (following) me

Note that there is no conjunction linking the two verbs (this is a characteristic of the sequences of verb phrases known as serial verb constructions).

gán versus jyuh

Since both may be translated with progressive '-ing' forms in English, it can be difficult to choose between **gán** and **jyuh**. As a general rule, **gán** is appropriate for activities involving change or movement and **jyuh** for static ones. In some cases either is possible, sometimes with a marked difference of meaning:

a	Kéuih ló-gám di wuhn-geuih	He's fetching the toys
b	Kéuih ló-jyuh di wuhn-geuih	He's holding the toys
a	Kéuih jeuk-gán sāam	She's getting dressed
b	Kéuih jeuk-jyuh tinh dyún kwàhn	She was wearing a short skirt
a	Kéuih daai-gán tinh jyunsehk génglín	She's putting on a diamond necklace
b	Kéuih daai-jyuh tinh jyunsehk génglín	She's wearing a diamond necklace

In each case **gán** indicates a dynamic, changing situation and **jyuh** a static one.

Exercise 19.1

Add **gán** and/or **háidauh** to express progressive aspect in the following sentences:

Example: **Kéuih tái syū** She's reading (a book) → **Kéuih tái-gán syū**

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Ngóh yihgá wuhn sāam | I'm changing (my clothes) now |
| 2 | Kéuihdeih káhm-máahn dá mǎhjeuk | They were playing mahjong last night |
| 3 | Kéuih góng dihnwá | She's (talking) on the phone |
| 4 | Yihgá lohk yúh | It's raining now |
| 5 | Dí saihouhjái wáan séui | The children are playing water games |
| 6 | Ngóhdeih hàahng làih | We're coming (walking) over |
| 7 | Kéuih yihgá chūng-lèuhng | She's taking a shower |
| 8 | Ngóh go jái waahk-wá | My son is drawing |
| 9 | Lóuhbáan hoi-wúí | The boss is having a meeting |
| 10 | Kéuih juhng lāu ngóhdeih | She's still angry with us |

Exercise 19.2

Add **gán** or **jyuh** as appropriate to complete the following sentences:

Example: **Ngóh tái sāam** I'm washing clothes → **Ngóh tái-gán sāam**

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Ngóh jǎ tuih sósìh | I'm holding a key |
| 2 | Kéuih máuih sung | She is buying groceries |
| 3 | Ngóhdeih hóu gwa léih | We miss you very much |
| 4 | Léih jyú matyéh a? | What are you cooking? |
| 5 | Kéuih yám gafe | He's drinking coffee |

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------------|
| 6 | Díngáai léih mohng ngóh a? | Why are you staring at me? |
| 7 | Dí sailouhjai chüng-tèuhng | The children are taking a bath |
| 8 | Hóu dô yáhn wán gūng | Many people are looking for a job |
| 9 | Ngóh yihgā daap mahotúih | I'm answering questions right now |
| 10 | Kéuih sehngyaht jeuk dí gauh sām | He's always wearing old clothes |

Exercise 19.3

Add **jyuh** and the verb provided to expand the following sentences:

Example: **Léih gān ngóh** Follow me,
(cheung 'sing') → **Léih gān-jyuh ngóh cheung** Sing along with me

- Kéuih jeuk sām**
He wears clothes (yàuh-séul 'swim')
- Kéuih líng dí hàhngléih**
He carried the baggage (jáu 'leave')
- Kéuih tái dihsih**
She's watching television (jouh gūngfó 'do homework')
- Díngáai léih mē mohng ngóh?**
Why aren't you looking at me (góng 'speak')?
- Ngóh jūngyí tēng yāmgohk**
I like to listen to music (yāusik 'relax')
- Kéuih sehngyaht chí léih go léui**
He's always hanging around your daughter (heul gāi 'go out')
- Go māmih póuh go jái**
The mother is carrying her son (chēut gāi 'go out')
- Díngáai léih daai ngáahn-gēng?**
Why do you wear your glasses? (fan-gau 'sleep')
- Ngóh lóuhgūng jā ga sán chē**
My husband is driving his new car (lāih jip ngóh 'to meet me')
- Ngóh mē wúih jó léih**
I won't get in your way (faat daah 'make money')

UNIT TWENTY

Auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary verbs are used together with a main verb. The most important auxiliary verbs are:

wúih	will, would	yīnggōi	should, ought to
hóiyh	can, may	yiu, sēniyi	want, need
sik	know (how to)	séung	want to

They express mainly 'modal' meanings having to do with possibility and necessity. The auxiliary verbs come before the main verb:

Ngóh wúih sé seun bái léih	I'll write to you
Léih yīnggōi dōuh-hip	You should apologise
Kéuih sik góng Faatmáan	He can speak French

An adverb may intervene between auxiliary and verb, as in the following examples:

Léih hóiyh sīn heui Jūngwàahn	You can go to Central <i>first</i>
Ngóh yīnggōi dō dī wānduhng	I should exercise <i>more</i>
Ngóhdeih séung faai dī bātyihp	We want to graduate <i>quickly</i>

Note that some of the auxiliary verbs double as main verbs:

Main verb	Auxiliary
sik to know (someone)	sik to know (how to do something)
yiu to want (something, someone)	yiu to need (to do)

Compare the meanings in the following:

Ngóh sĭk kéuih	I know her
Ngóh sĭk yàuh-séui	I know how to swim
Kéuih yiu gáfē	She wants coffee
Kéuih yiu sĭhk-yéh	She wants/needs to eat

A rare irregularity should be noted here. The form **m̃h yiu** means 'don't want', usually as a main verb:

Ngóh m̃h yiu tĭhmbán, ngōi	I don't want any dessert, thanks
Kéuih m̃h yiu daap fēigēi	He doesn't want to take the plane

However, the negative form of **yiū** used as an auxiliary meaning 'need' is not **m̃h yiu** but **msái**:

	Ngóh gāmyaht yiu fān gūng	I need to go to work today
but	Ngóh gāmyaht msái fān gūng	I don't need to go to work today
	Kéuih yiu tái yisāng	He needs to see the doctor
but	Kéuih msái tái yisāng	He doesn't need to see the doctor

sēuiyiū is a more explicit form of **yiū**:

Ngóhdeih sēuiyiū dō dĩ yāusĭk	We need to rest more
Léih m̃h sēuiyiū gam sām-gāp	You needn't be so impatient

háng 'to be willing' is used mainly (though not exclusively) in the negative form **m̃h háng**:

Ngóh go jái m̃h háng fān hohk	My son won't go to school
Kéuih m̃h háng tēng ngóh dihnwá	She won't answer my calls
Ngóh gājē háng bōng sáu	My (elder) sister is willing to help

Modal meanings

Since Cantonese does not have a grammatical category of tense, **wúih** should not be thought of simply as a future tense. Rather, **wúih** has a range of meanings including future ('will') and conditional ('would').

Ngóh fīngyaht wúih làih	I'll come tomorrow
Ngóh m̃h wúih bōng kéuih	I wouldn't help him

The basic modal meanings can be modified by modal adverbs such as **waahkjé** and **hókāhng** 'perhaps', **hángdihng** and **yátdihng** 'certainly'

Kéuihdeih waahkjé wáih yihmáhn	They may (perhaps) emigrate
Kéuihdeih hángdihng wáih yihmáhn	They will definitely emigrate
Ngóh hólahng wáih jòuh	I may do it
Ngóh yátdihng wáih jòuh	I will certainly do it

Note here the distinction between **yátdihng yiu** meaning 'must' in the sense of obligation and **yátdihng haih** in the sense of logical necessity or inference.

Léih yátdihng yiu láih	You really must come
Léih yátdihng haih jyūn-gā	You must be an expert
Kéuih yátdihng yiu jòuh ge	He must (has to) do it
Yátdihng haih kéuih jòuh ge	It must have been him (who did it)

Since **haih** is not used with adjectives (Unit 9), **yátdihng** alone indicates inference with an adjective:

Léih yátdihng hóu guih	You must be tired
Léih go léui yátdihng hóu lēk ge	Your daughter must be pretty smart

yīnggōi can mean 'should' in the sense of either obligation or probability:

Léih yīnggōi jéunsih fān gūng
You should get to work on time

Léih fahn láihmáht yīnggōi jéunsih dom
Your present should arrive on time (I expect)

Kéuih gānyaht yīnggōi fān láih ge
He should be back today (I predict, and/or he is obliged to do so)

Finally, note that the meanings of possibility and ability are often more naturally expressed by **dāk** following the verb, rather than by **hóiyih** 'can':

Léihdeih jáu dāk la (or **Léihdeih hóiyih jáu la**)
(lit. you leave can already)
You can leave now

Tiuh yú sihk dāk la (or **Tiuh yú hóiyih sihk la**)
(lit. the fish eat can already)
The fish can be eaten

Similarly, verb + particle combinations with **mh** (see Unit 17) are often used to express the negative counterparts meaning 'cannot' in preference to **mh hóiyih**:

Chín bông mih dóu léih (lit. money help not succeed you) Money can't help you	or	Chín mih hóiyh bông léih (lit. money not can help you) Money can't help you
Ngóh wán mih dóu kéuih (lit. I find not succeed her) I can't find her	(not	*Ngóh mih hóiyh wán dóu kéuih)

There is a subtle difference between ... **mih dóu**, meaning inability to do something, and **mih ... dāk**, meaning that something is not allowed or not possible due to external circumstances:

Ngóh bông mih dóu léih	I can't help you (because I lack the ability)
Ngóh mih bông dāk léih	I can't help you (because I'm not allowed to, I have no time, etc.)

Consequently, inability to perceive something is expressed with ... **mih dóu**:

Ngóh gāmyaht sēung-fūng, mahn mih dóu yéih
I have a cold today, (so I) can't smell anything

Ngóh lám mih dóu baahnfant
I can't think of a solution

See also Unit 17 on verbs of perception.

Exercise 20.1

Translate the following using a modal auxiliary:

- 1 I need to go home (**fān ūkkéi**)
- 2 She knows how to drive (**jā chē**)
- 3 I'm going to apologize (**dōuh-hip**)
- 4 My friend will take you there (**daai léih heui**)
- 5 You can take the train (**daap fóchē heui**)
- 6 We should arrive on time (**jéunsih dou**)
- 7 You may leave early (**jóu jáu**)
- 8 I will return the books (**wáahn syu**)
- 9 He knows how to answer the question (**daap mahntaih**)
- 10 She should get married (**git-fān**)
- 11 She's willing to reduce the price (**gáam ga**)
- 12 We're willing to compromise (**tóhhip**)

- 13 They're not willing to wait any longer (**dáng loih dĩ**)
 14 My wife doesn't need to attend the meeting (**hōi-wúí**)
 15 We don't need to worry (**dāamsām**)

Exercise 20.2

Make the following statements negative:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóh sīk kéuih | I know him |
| 2 Ngóh sīk heui gódouh | I know how to go there |
| 3 Ngóh yiu fan-gaan | I need to sleep |
| 4 Kéuih yiu faahn | She wants rice |
| 5 Kéuih wúih fāam ùkkéi | She will go home |
| 6 Léih hóiyih lauh dái | You can stay behind |
| 7 Léih hóiyih wuhn sām | You may change your clothes |
| 8 Ngóhdeh yinggoi yáusik | We should rest |
| 9 Kéuih yinggoi máaih láu | She should buy a flat |
| 10 Kéuih sīk tàahn káhm | He knows how to play the piano |

Exercise 20.3

Express the following situations using a modal verb:

- 1 You want to date (**yeuk**) someone
- 2 Undertake to inform (**túngjī**) someone on a future occasion
- 3 Regret that you cannot help (**bōng**) someone this time
- 4 You don't need anything to eat (**sīhk**)
- 5 Someone should drive more carefully (**sámsām dĩ**)
- 6 Give someone permission to give in their homework late (**chhĩ dĩ gāau gūngfo**)
- 7 Tell your students they should not be so rude (**gam chōulóuh**)
- 8 You are not willing to pay so much (**béi gam dū chhĩn**)
- 9 You do not know how to get to the post office (**heul yàuh-gók**)
- 10 Your friend would not agree (**tùhngyi**)

Exercise 20.4

Add a modal adverb to the sentences provided to give the meaning indicated:

Example. Léih yiu jóu dĩ sanching → Léih yātdihng yiu jóu dĩ sanching
 You must apply early

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Ngóh gām-tín wúih gít-fān | I may get married this year |
| 2 Ngóh gām-tín wúih gít-fān | I will definitely get married this year |
| 3 Kéuihdeih hái ùkkéi | They must be at home |
| 4 Kéuihdeih hái ùkkéi | They may be at home |
| 5 Ngóh wúih sahpyih dím jichihh fāan dou ùkkéi | I will definitely be home before twelve |
| 6 Ngóh yiu sahpyih dím jichihh fāan dou ùkkéi | I must be home before twelve |
| 7 Fūng seun yiu fīngyaht dou ge | The letter must arrive tomorrow |
| 8 Fūng seun haih kàhmyaht dou ge | It must have arrived yesterday |
| 9 Go leuhtsi yiu bōu lēk | The lawyer must be (needs to be) good |
| 10 Go leuhtsi hōu lēk | The lawyer must be good (it seems) |

Exercise 20.5

Give alternatives to the following sentences using **dāk** (see Unit 17) or **mh dóu**:

Example: Léih hóiyh tái You can take a look → Léih tái dāk

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Ngóh gām-máahn hóiyh pùih léih | I can keep you company tonight |
| 2 Ngóhdeih mh hóiyh yahp heui | We can't go in |
| 3 Léih yihgā hóiyh jáu | You can leave now |
| 4 Hohksāang mh hóiyh góng daaih wáih | Students may not tell lies |
| 5 Hóiyh sihk la | We can eat (now) |
| 6 Ngóh gāmyaht mh hóiyh heui | I can't go today |
| 7 Ngóh mh hóiyh sihk tihmbán | I can't eat dessert |
| 8 Ngóh mh hóiyh daap léih | I can't answer you |
| 9 Jéung géipiu mh hóiyh góh | The air ticket cannot be changed |
| 10 Nidouh mh hóiyh tēng Daaihluhk dihatòih | Here we cannot hear mainland radio programmes |

UNIT TWENTY-ONE

Passives

Cantonese passives are signalled by a **béi** phrase similar to the English *by* phrase. The **béi** phrase (**béi** + a noun phrase indicating the agent of the action) occurs before the verb:

Dī syutgōu béi dī sailouhjái sīhk-jó
(*lit.* the ice cream by the children eaten)
The ice cream was eaten by the children

Bún syū béi go hohksāang je-jó
(*lit.* the book by a student borrowed)
The book was borrowed by a student

Ngóh go jái béi sīmsāang faht-gwo
(*lit.* my son by teacher punished)
My son has been punished by the teacher

The noun phrase denoting the agent of the action is obligatory in spoken Cantonese, in contrast to English and Mandarin which allow agentless passives. When the identity of the agent is unknown or left unspecified, the word **yàhn** 'person' or **yéh** 'thing' is used generically:

Ngóh go ngāmbāau béi yàhn tāt-jó
(*lit.* my wallet by person stolen)
My wallet was stolen

Kéuih sèhngyaht béi yàhn nguak
(*lit.* he often by person cheated)
He often gets cheated

Ngóh yaoh béi yéh ngānuh chān
(*lit.* I again by something bitten)
I've been bitten again

Note the contrast with the English translations in which the agent is not mentioned at all.

A peculiarity of Cantonese passives is that a passive verb can still take a direct object. This applies especially to those verbs introduced in Unit 16 which take two objects, such as **tāu** 'steal', **faht** 'fine' and **mahn** 'ask':

Kéuih bái yàhn tāt-jó go ngàhnbaan
She had her purse stolen

Ngóh bái yàhn faht-jó hóu dô chíh
I was fined a lot of money

Ngóh mē séung bái yàhn mahn gam dô yéh
I don't want to be asked so much

This possibility gives rise to alternative passive forms for the same idea:

- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|
| a | Ngóh go chēpàaih bái yàhn ló-jó | My licence has been taken away |
| b | Ngóh bái yàhn ló-jó go chēpàaih | I've had my licence taken away |
| a | Kéuih ga chē bái yàhn johng-gwo | Her car has been dented |
| b | Kéuih bái yàhn johng-gwo ga chē | She's had her car dented |

The first version provides an objective statement of events, while the second focuses on the effect on the person suffering the misfortune.

Passive meaning without bái

There are a number of ways in which Cantonese effectively avoids passives, involving constructions which appear to be passive in meaning but lack the **bái** phrase:

Gān fóng yàuh-jó la
(lit. the room painted)
The room has been painted

Nī gihn sām jeuk-gwo yāt chí
(lit. this blouse worn once)
This blouse has been worn once

Ga gēi juhng jing-gán
(lit. the machine still mending)
The machine is still being mended

These cases may be seen as instances of topicalization – making the object the topic of the sentence by placing it first, as described in the next unit. Typically the verb has an aspect marker as in the above examples, or a verbal particle indicating the result of the action (see Unit 17):

Jek gáu wán fān la
(lit. the dog found back)
The dog has been found again

Yàuhhei wán yùhn la
(lit. game played finish)
The game is finished

Tuh yú jīng hóu la
(lit. the fish steamed complete)
The fish is done (having been steamed)

This pattern also commonly occurs with an auxiliary (see Unit 20):

Dī cháugāi yīnggōi fah ge
(lit. those speculators should punish)
Those speculators should be punished

Ngóh go léui sèhngyáht yín pónh
(lit. my daughter always wants carrying)
My daughter always wants to be carried

Tuh fu sái-msái góí a?
(lit. the trousers need to alter or not)
Do the trousers need to be altered?

In such sentences a subject could be inserted:

Tuh fu (ngóh) sái-msái góí a?
(lit. the trousers (I) need to alter or not)
Do (I) need to alter the trousers?

Nī gāan úk (ngóhdeih) yīnggōi jóngsām
(lit. this house (we) should redecorate)
(We) should redecorate this house

Nī dī yùhnjāk (yáhn-yáhn) yín gei-jyuh
(lit. these principles (everyone) need remember)
(Everyone) needs to remember these principles

For the most part, however, the subject remains implicit and is understood as 'one' or 'people' in general.

Exercise 21.1

Turn the following active sentences into their passive counterparts using *béi*:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Ga chē-jó-jyuh ngóhdeih | The car is blocking us |
| 2 Gíngchaat jūk-jó kéuihdeih | The police have caught them |
| 3 Dī sailouhjái gáu lyuhn-jó gāan fóng | The children have made a mess of the room |
| 4 Nī go hohksāang yèhng-jó gó go daaih jéung | The student has won that grand prize |
| 5 Kéuih je-jó ngóh go saúdóí | She has borrowed my handbag |
| 6 Dī chē séng chòuh séng-jó ngóh | The noise of the cars has awakened me |
| 7 Kéuih go làahm-pàhngyáuh máaih-jó gāan ùk | Her boyfriend has bought the house |
| 8 Kéuihdeih jing waaih-jó go dīhndūh | They have broken the computer |
| 9 Ngóh yuhng-jó dī chím | I have used the money |
| 10 Kéuihdeih sihk-jó dī jyúgwūlk | They have eaten the chocolate |
| 11 Kéuih dá laahn-jó jek bái | He has broken the glass |
| 12 Ngóh tái-gwo fūng seun | I have read the letter |
| 13 Kéuih hoi-gwo go seunséung | He has opened the mailbox |
| 14 Kéuih jing-gán ga chē | He is mending the car |
| 15 Kéuihdeih maaih-jó fūk wá | They have sold the picture |

Exercise 21.2

Turn the following sentences into passive ones by either a *béi* + *yàhn* phrase or a *béi* + *yéh* phrase (note *yáuh yàhn* meaning 'somebody': see Unit 6). In some cases there may be two alternative versions.

Example: *Yáuh yàhn chéung-jó ngóh go léuih-pàhngyáuh* Someone stole my girlfriend from me → *Ngóh go léuih-pàhngyáuh béi yàhn chéung-jó* or *Ngóh béi yàhn chéung-jó go léuih-pàhngyáuh*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Yáuh yàhn ló-jó ngóh go saubūu | Someone took my watch |
| 2 Yáuh yàhn hoi-jó douh mùn | Someone opened the door |

- | | |
|--|---|
| 3 Yáuh yàhn sĭk-jó láahngheigēi | Someone turned off the air conditioning |
| 4 Yáuh yàhn ngāak-jó kéuih dī chīn | Someone cheated him out of his money |
| 5 Yáuh yàhn mǎaih-jó dī syū | Someone bought the books |
| 6 Yáuh yéh ngāauh dóu ngóh jek sán | Something has bitten my hand |
| 7 Yáuh dī yéh fāahn dóu kéuih | Something has troubled him |
| 8 Yáuh dī yéh yíngheung dóu kéuih
ge sāmchīng | Something has affected her mood |

† Exercise 21.3

Render the passive sentences below with non-passive (topicalized) alternatives, adding an aspect marker or auxiliary where appropriate:

Example: The tuition has been paid (bái) → **Hohkfai bái-jó la**

- 1 This room (gāan fóng) has been booked (dehng)
- 2 The house (gāan ūk) is being built (bái)
- 3 The film (tou hei) should be seen (tái)
- 4 The book (bún syū) has been published (chēutbāan)
- 5 The shirt (gīhn sām) doesn't need to be ironed (tong)
- 6 Your plan (go gáiwahk) is being considered (háauleuih)
- 7 The car (ga chē) has been checked (yihm) before
- 8 The picture (fūk séung) has been taken (yíng) already
- 9 The light (jāan dāng) has been turned off (sĭk)
- 10 The child (go sailouhjái) always wants to be carried (póuh)

UNIT TWENTY-TWO

Word order and topicalization

For the most part, word order in Cantonese may be said to follow the pattern subject – verb – object, much as in English:

Subject	Verb	Object	
Ngóh	jūngyi	kénih	I like him/her
Ngóh sailón	máanl-jó	gāan ũk	My brother has bought a house

It would be more accurate, however, to say that while Cantonese can be treated in this way – this order normally works – departures from it play an important role in the language. In particular, the sentence need not begin with the subject. Indeed, the object of the verb often comes first if it represents what the sentence is felt to be about:

Nī go yàhn ngóh gin-gwe
(lit. this person I have seen)
I've seen this person before

Póutūng-wá ngóh sīk síu-síu
(lit. Putonghua I know a little)
I know a little Putonghua

Fahn bouji léih báai hái hīndouh a?
(lit. the newspaper you put where)
Where did you put the newspaper?

This pattern is known as topicalization – making something other than the subject the ‘topic’ of the sentence – and while also possible in English, its use is much more widespread in Cantonese. In English it is used mostly for contrasting two things, explicitly or implicitly, and this also occurs in Cantonese:

Pihnggwó ngóh jūngyi síhk

Apples I like to eat (but not bananas)

Chín ngóh hóyih béi léih, síhgaan jauh àh hóyih laak

Money I can give you, but not time

Deihtit ngóh chók-gwo, dihnché jauh meih (chók-gwo)

(lit. underground I've taken, tram then not yet)

I've been on the underground, but not the tram

Bákging choi ngóhdeih síhk-gwo, Chihhjāu choi jauh meih (síhk-gwo)

(lit. Beijing food we have eaten before, Chiu Chow food then not yet)

We've eaten Peking food but not Chiu Chow

Note some characteristic features of sentences of this kind:

- (i) the adverb **jauh** is often added after the second topic to make the contrast more explicit;
- (ii) the predicate can be omitted in the second clause;
- (iii) in many cases the most natural English translation does not put the object first; this illustrates how the Cantonese syntax 'prefers' the topicalized version.

Topic without subject

Making the object the topic usually results in the word order: object – subject – verb, as in the above examples. Remembering that the subject can be omitted, however (see Unit 4), we are often left with merely object – verb:

Sāngyaht daahn-gōu síhk-jó la

(lit. birthday cake eaten already)

We've eaten the birthday cake

Dī hēungbān yám saai la

(lit. the champagne drunk all)

The champagne is all gone

Gihn sāam tong-jó meih a?

(lit. the shirt ironed or not yet)

Has the shirt been ironed?

Such a pattern often appears like a passive sentence, and may be so translated (see Unit 21):

Sân gēichèuhng jūhng léi-gán

(lit. new airport still building)

They're still building the new airport

(or: The new airport is still being built)

Ga chē hái chóng dōuh jīng-gán

(lit. the car at the garage there repairing)

They're repairing the car at the garage

(or: The car is being repaired at the garage)

Hanging topics

A less familiar, but characteristically Chinese form of topicalization occurs when the topic is neither the subject nor the object of the verb, but something more loosely related to the content of the sentence. We may distinguish several types of 'hanging topics' of this kind:

- (i) The topic sets a location in time or space:

Hēunggóng jeui gwai haih jōu ūk

(lit. Hong Kong most expensive is rent house)

In Hong Kong the highest expense is rent

Hahŭn ngóh jūngyi yàuh-séui

(In) summer, I like swimming

Seuhnghóh ngóh yáuh pàhngyáuh, Bákging jàuh móuh

I have some friends in Shanghai, but not in Beijing

- (ii) The topic sets up a whole, of which an element later in the sentence represents a part:

Gam dô geijé jeui lēk haih kēuih

(lit. so many reporters most smart is him)

Of all the reporters he's the brightest

Ni go daahn-gōn kēuih sīh-jó yāt bun

(lit. this cake he's eaten one half)

He's eaten half of this cake

Sahp go bohksāung yáuh gáu go hóyh yáuh daaihhoihk

(lit. ten students have nine can enter university)

Nine out of ten students can enter university

- (iii) The topic states a general category of which the subject or object represents a particular type:

Síusyut ngóh tái Jūngmán suai dĩ
(As for) novels, I read Chinese ones faster

Béjáu léih hóiyh yám Chinglón
(For) beer, you can drink Tsingtao

Gwóngdūng gū, ngóh jūngyi tēng Wòhng Fēi
As far as Cantonese songs are concerned, I like to listen to Faye Wong

Exercise 22.1

Change the word order to make the object the topic of the sentence:

Example: **Ngóh meih síhk-gwo yùh-chí** I've never eaten shark's fin
→ **Yùh-chí ngóh meih síhk-gwo**

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Ngóh máaih-jó gó bún syū | I bought that book |
| 2 Kéuih hóu jūngyi síhk syutgōu | She likes to eat ice cream |
| 3 Ngóh m̄h sík heui Wòhnggok | I don't know the way to Mongkok |
| 4 Ngóhdeih tái-gwo nī tou hei | We've seen this film |
| 5 Kéuih sík góng Chihjāuwá | She knows how to speak Chiuchow dialect |
| 6 Léih tēng-gwo nī sáu gō meih a? | Have you heard this song before? |
| 7 Léih yáuh-móuh sāam baak mǎn a? | Have you got 300 dollars? |
| 8 Kéuih heui-gwo Hóiyèuhug Gūngyún | She has been to the Ocean Park |
| 9 Ngóh jeui jūngyi Siubōng ge yámngohk | I like Chopin's music best |
| 10 Ngóh hóu tūhngyi léih ge táifaat | I quite agree with your view |

Exercise 22.2

Add a clause using **jauh** to contrast with the first (for negation in the second clause, see Unit 14):

Example: **Fūng seun sé yùh la, bún syū jauh meih** The letter's finished, the book is not

- 1 **A-Ann ngòh gin-gwo, A-May** _____
Ann I've met, May I haven't
- 2 **Ni gihn sàam sái-jó, gó gihn** _____
This dress has been washed, that one ...
- 3 **Wohnggok hóu fóngbìhn, Sàigung** _____
Mongkok is convenient, Sai Kung ...
- 4 **Ni tou hei hóu chèuhng, gó tou** _____
This film is pretty long, that one ...
- 5 **Dihnsih ngòh yahtyaht dón tái, dihnying** _____
Television I watch every day, films ...
- 6 **Kéuih mùihmúi ngòh sīk, kéuih sàilóu** _____
Her sister I know, her brother ...
- 7 **Onjāu ngòh heui-gwo, Méihgwok** _____
Australia I've been to, America ...
- 8 **Léih ge táihyih ngòh jipsauk, kéuih ge** _____
Your suggestion I accept, his ...
- 9 **Yàuh-séui ngòh bohk-gwo, móimgkàuh** _____
Swimming I've learnt, tennis ...
- 10 **Làuhhàhng yāmgòhkh ngòh jūngyi, gúdín yāmgòhkh** _____
Pop music I like, classical music ...

Exercise 22.3

Express your opinion or experience of the following topics, beginning the sentence with the phrase provided:

Example: **Hēunggóng Dóu** ... (Hong Kong Island): **Hēunggóng Dóu**
ngòh mēk sīk lóuh I don't know my way around Hong Kong Island

- 1 **Fai chān** (fast food) ...
- 2 **Syūga** (in the summer holidays) ...
- 3 **Sailouhjái** (children) ...
- 4 **Gam dō yeuhng dímsām** (of all the kinds of dim sum) ...
- 5 **Sáutàih dihnwá** (mobile phones) ...
- 6 **Sāam tuih tái** (of the three ties) ...
- 7 **Yahtmán** (Japanese) ...
- 8 **Pásuchē** (sports cars) ...
- 9 **Junggwok yāmgòhkh** (Chinese music) ...
- 10 **Git-fān** (marriage, getting married) ...

UNIT TWENTY-THREE

Yes/no questions

To ask a question to which the answer is 'yes' or 'no', Cantonese in effect asks 'verb-not-verb?' This is rather like asking 'Is X the case or not?' without the 'or' being expressed:

Kéuihdeih làih-mh-làih a?

(*lit.* they coming (or) not coming)

Are they coming?

Léih seun-mh-seun a?

Do you believe it?

Léih dáng-mh-dáng kéuih a?

Will you wait for her?

The same pattern applies to adjectives:

Ga ché gwai-mh-gwai a?

Is the car expensive?

Dī hàhngléih chúhng-mh-chúhng a?

Is the luggage heavy?

Léih gān fóng dānh-mh-dānh a?

Is your room big?

With auxiliaries (see Unit 20), the auxiliary is repeated before the verb:

Gāmyaht wúih-mh-wúih lohk yúh a?

(*lit.* today will (or) will not fall rain)

Will it rain today?

Léih sik-mh-sik góng Yáhtmán a?

Can you speak Japanese?

Léih yiu-mh-yiu heui sái-sáu-gān a?

Do you want to go the bathroom?

Applying this pattern to the verb **haih** 'to be' we have **haih-mhaih** 'is it the case', a form which is especially useful in checking information:

Léih haih-mhaih sing Tàahm ga? Is your surname Tam?
Ngóhdeih haih-mhaih gamyaht heui a? Is it today we are going?

Some points to notice:

- (i) The particle **a** is usually added: this is felt to make the question more polite, less of an imposition on the listener (see Unit 25).
- (ii) If the verb, adjective or auxiliary being questioned has more than one syllable, only the first syllable is repeated:

jūngyi	like	Léihdeih jāng-mh-jūngyi Héunggóng a? Do you like Hong Kong?
sānchíng	apply	Léih sǎn-mh-sānchíng nǐ fahn gūng a? Will you apply for this job?
hōisām	happy	Léih gāmyaht hōi-mh-hōisām a? Are you happy today?
chūngmāhng	smart	Kéuih chūng-mh-chūngmāhng a? Is he smart?
hóyih	can	Ngóh hó-mh-hóyih chók a? Can I sit down?
yīnggōi	should	Ngóh yīng-mh-yīnggōi douhhip a? Should I apologize?

Exceptional verbs

Two common verbs have special negative forms, which also need to be used in questions. Since the negative form of **yáuh** is **móuh** (Unit 6) the question form is not ***yáuh-mh-yáuh** but **yáuh-móuh**:

Léih yáuh-móuh saihouhjai a? Do you have children?
Ngóhdeih yáuh-móuh sǎhgān a? Do we have time?

We also use **yáuh-móuh** to ask a question about a past event

Léih yáuh-móuh heui máaih yéh a? Did you go shopping?
Kàhmyaht yáuh-móuh lohk yúh a? Did it rain yesterday?

Similarly, given that the negative counterpart of **yiuh** meaning 'need' is **msái** (Unit 20), the corresponding question form is **sái-msái**:

- A: Léih sái-msái tái yīsāng a? Do you need to see a doctor?
 B: Yau a (not *sái a) Yes
- A: Ngóh sái-msái bōng-sáu a? Do I need to help?
 B: Msái la, ngóh No, thank you

Replying to questions

The standard reply to questions of this kind is to repeat the whole verb or adjective used in the question, adding the negative word **mh** for a negative answer:

- A: Léih jūng-mh-jūngyi nīdowh a? (*lit.* you like (or) not like here)
 Do you like it here?
 B: Jūngyi a (*lit.* like)
 Yes (not *baih, see Unit 7)
- A: Léih heui-mh-heui Lènhndēum a? Are you going to London?
 B: Mh heui la No

Questions with meih

Another important question form uses **meih** 'not yet' which when added to a statement makes a question:

- Léih síhk báau meih a? Have you eaten enough?
 Ngóhdeih wáan yúhn meih a? Have we finished playing yet?

This form is used to ask whether an action has taken place or not, with completion signalled by verbal particles like **báau** and **yúhn** above (see Unit 17) or by the aspect markers **jó** and **gwo** (Unit 18):

- Kéuih git-jó-fān meih a? Is he married?
 Kéuih git-gwo-fān meih a? Has he ever been married?
 Léih gāau-jó séui meih a? Have you paid your taxes yet?
 Léih gāau-gwo séui meih a? Have you ever paid taxes?

The standard responses pick up the relevant part of the question as follows: Yes repeat the verb and aspect marker, often adding the particle **la**:

- A: Léih sík-jó dang meih a? Have you turned off the lights?
 B: Sík-jó la Yes

- A: Léih heui-gwo Maahn-gūk meih a? Have you ever been to Bangkok?
 B: Heui-gwo la Yes, I have

No - repeat **meih**, typically adding the particle **a** to make the negative response less abrupt:

- A: Kéuih sīng-jó-jūk meih a? Has she got promoted?
 B: Meih a No, not yet
- A: Léih si-gwo waah-t-syut meih a? Have you ever tried skiing?
 B: Meih a No, I haven't

Exercise 23.1

Form yes/no questions based on the following statements:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih tīngyaht heui hāahng-sāan | We're going hiking tomorrow |
| 2 Hēunggóng yìghā hóu yíht | It's hot in Hong Kong now |
| 3 Kéuih gūngsi yáuh mah-tàih | His company has problems |
| 4 A-John yíhging fāan-jó làih | John is back (has returned) already |
| 5 Léih yiu làuh háidouh a | You need to stay here |
| 6 Kéuihdeih hūn-jó ùk | They've moved house |
| 7 Taaigwok léihdeih heui-gwo | You've been to Thailand before |
| 8 Gāmyaht haih gakhèih lèihge | Today is a holiday |
| 9 Kéuih haih gáu yuht chéutsai ge | She was born in September |
| 10 Léih ùkkéi hóu yáuh ge | Your home is a long way away |

Exercise 23.2

Add an auxiliary to form a question using **wáih**, **yínggōi**, **hóyih**, **yiuh/msái**, **sik**:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Léihdeih _____ yíh-máhn a? | Are you going to emigrate? |
| 2 Tīngyaht _____ fāan-gūng a? | Do we need to go to work tomorrow? |
| 3 Léih _____ jā-chē a? | Do you know how to drive? |
| 4 Ngóhdeih _____ chih di ján a? | Could we leave a bit later? |
| 5 Léih _____ bōng ngóhdeih a? | Would you help us? |
| 6 Léih _____ pàih léih ùkkéi-yáuh a? | Will you stay with your family? |

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|----------------------|--|
| 7 | Kéuih _____ | je chin gāau jōn a? | Does she need to borrow money to pay her rent? |
| 8 | Kéuihdeih _____ | jōu dī git-fān lē? | Maybe they should get married sooner? |
| 9 | Léih _____ | hingjūk sāangyaht a? | Will you have a birthday celebration? |
| 10 | Ngóh _____ | gáau yéung jōuh a? | Should I act this way? |

Exercise 23.3

Answer the following questions, alternating positive and negative answers:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Léih ūkkéi yáuh-móuh dīhlóuh a? | Do you have a computer at home? |
| 2 | Kéuih yáuh-móuh bóuhám a? | Does he have insurance? |
| 3 | Nī go haih-mhaih lóuhbáan a? | Is this the boss? |
| 4 | Haih-mhaih léih sé ge? | Did you write this? |
| 5 | Léihdeih wúh-mh-wúh git-fān a? | Will you get married? |
| 6 | Léih háau-jó sīh meih a? | Have you had your exams yet? |
| 7 | Léih heui-gwo Senhghói meih a? | Have you been to Shanghai? |
| 8 | Kéuih fan-jó meih a? | Has she gone to sleep yet? |
| 9 | Léih gaaui yúhn syū meih a? | Have you finished teaching? |
| 10 | Ga chē johng-gwo meih a? | Has the car been in an accident? |

UNIT TWENTY-FOUR

Wh-questions

Wh-questions involve the 'wh-words' *who, what, where*, and so on. Their Cantonese equivalents are mostly based on the interrogative forms **bīn**, **gēi** and **dīm**:

bīn ...	which?	gēi ...	how ...?
dīm (yéung)	how?	mātyéh	what?
bīngō	who?	gēisih	when?
dīm gāi	why?	jōuh mātyéh	why?
bīndouh	where?	gēi dō	how many?

Syntax of questions

Instead of coming at the beginning of the question as in English, the Cantonese question words come wherever the corresponding word or phrase would come in a plain statement:

Statement	Question
Ngóh tàahn kàhm I play the piano	Bīngō tàahn kàhm a? Who plays the piano?
Ngóh gin dóu Peter (lit. I see Peter)	Léih gin dóu bīngō a? (lit. you see who)
I saw Peter	Who did you see?
Ngóh síhk mihn (lit. I eat noodles)	Léih síhk mātyéh a? (lit. you eat what)
I'm eating noodles	What are you eating?
Ngóh heui Yīnggwok (lit. I go England)	Léih heui bīndouh a? (lit. you go where)
I'm going to England	Where are you going?

Ngóh tngyaht jáu
(lit. I tomorrow leave)
I'm leaving tomorrow
Nídouh yáuh yá síhk
(lit. here have fish eat)
There are fish to eat here

Léih gétsih jáu a?
(lit. you when leave)
When are you leaving?
Bíndouh yáuh yá síhk a?
(lit. where have fish eat)
Where are there fish to eat?

Similarly, 'how' and 'why' usually come between the subject of the sentence and the verb, like the corresponding phrase in a statement:

Ngóhdeih daap bási heui
gěichèuhng
(lit. we take bus go airport)
We go to the airport by bus

Ngóhdeih díng yéung heui
gěichèuhng a?
(lit. we how go airport)
How do we get to the airport?

Ngóh yánwaih kéuih gam sěungsām
(lit. I because (of) him so sad)
I'm so sad because of him

Léih dínggái gam sěungsām a?
(lit. you how come so sad)
Why are you so sad?

Kéuih waih-jó ngóh nìh yiu fahn
gūng
(lit. he on account of me not take the job)
He turned down the job for my sake

Kéuih dínggái nìh yiu fahn
gūng a?
(lit. he how come not take the job)
Why did he turn down the job?

Alternatively, **dínggái** 'why' can also begin the question:

Dínggái léih gam sěungsām a? Why are you so sad?
Dínggái kéuih nìh làih hoi mahn gé? Why doesn't he open the door?

Jouh mātýéh (lit. 'do what?') is an alternative expression for 'why' questions:

Kéuih jouh mātýéh gam lāu a?
(lit. she do what so angry)
Why is she so angry?

Léih jouh mātýéh kéih háidouh a?
(lit. you do what stand here)
What are you standing there for?

Jouh mātýéh usually asks the purpose behind someone's doing something, while **dínggái** (lit. 'how to explain?') asks the reason for it.

Questions and politeness

Note that the sentence particle **a** is usually added at the end, as in other types of question (Unit 23). Without it, the question would sound abrupt and even impolite: for example, if you are asking why someone is doing something, which already represents something of an intrusion. A way to make such a question more polite is to add **Chéng mahn** 'May I ask' as well as **a**:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Chéng mahn yihgā géi dím a? | May I ask what time it is? |
| Chéng mahn léih gwai sing a? | May I ask what your surname is? |

This formula is especially appropriate for asking questions of strangers.

Interrogative phrases

bín 'which' combines with the classifier appropriate to the noun concerned (see Unit 8); the noun itself can either be included or be understood:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Léih jūngyi bín fuk (wá) a? | Which (picture) do you like? |
| Ngóhdelh máaih bín tuih (yú) a? | Which (fish) shall we buy? |
| Léih go léui dehk bín gāan (hohkhaanh) a? | Which (school) does your daughter go to? |

gél 'how (many)' combines with adverbs and adjectives to form question phrases such as **gél loih** 'how long' and **gél dō** 'how many/how much':

- | | |
|--|--|
| Léih làih-jó Héunggóng géi loih a? | How long have you been in Hong Kong? |
| Léih tuih fu géi chéuhng a? | How long are your trousers? |
| Ngóh tuihng léih góng-gwo géi dō chí a? | How many times have I told you? |
| Daap hási yiu géi dō chí a? | How much does it cost to take the bus? |

Note also the phrases **gél dō seui** to ask a person's age and **gél dím (jūng)** to ask the time:

- Léih go jái géi dō seui a?**
(*lit* your son how many years)
How old is your son?

Ngóhdeih géi dím chéut múngháu a?

(lit we what time go out door)

What time do we leave?

Exercise 24.1

Form questions by substituting a question word for the phrase in bold italic type:

Example: *Peter dá dihnwá làih* → *Bingo dá dihnwá làih a?*

- 1a ***Ngóh pàhngyáuh hái heiyún dǎng ngóhdeih***
My friend is waiting for us at the cinema
- b ***Ngóh pàhngyáuh hái heiyún dǎng ngóhdeih***
My friend is waiting for us *at the cinema*
- 2a ***Kéuihdeih tǐngyaht heui Dòlèuhndō***
They are going *to Toronto* tomorrow
- b ***Kéuihdeih tǐngyaht heui Dòlèuhndō***
They are going to Toronto *tomorrow*
- 3a ***Gām máahn yáuh yú sǐhk***
There's fish for dinner tonight
- b ***Gām máahn yáuh yú sǐhk***
There's fish for dinner *tonight*
- 4a ***Ngóh daap bási heui hohkhaauh***
I go *to school* by bus
- b ***Ngóh daap bási heui hohkhaauh***
I go to school *by bus*
- 5a ***Kéuih waih-jó dī jǎitui yǐhmǎhn***
She emigrated for *the children's sake*
- b ***Kéuih waih-jó dī jǎitui yǐhmǎhn***
She emigrated *for the children's sake*
- 6a ***Léih jyuh-jó (hái) Méihgwok sahþ lǐhn la***
You have been living *in America* for ten years
- b ***Léih jyuh-jó (hái) Méihgwok sahþ lǐhn la***
You have been living in America *for ten years*

Exercise 24.2

Form questions to elicit information as follows:

- 1 Ask what your friend is eating (**sǐhk**)
- 2 Ask a friend when he will come back (**fāu làih**)

- 3 Ask what time the plane (**fēigēi**) departs (**héifēi**)
- 4 Ask where someone lives (**jyuh**)
- 5 Ask why there is nobody here (**móuh yáhn**)
- 6 Ask a child her age (**seui**)
- 7 Ask why your friend is late (**chih-dou**)
- 8 Ask what time the library (**tòuhsyū-gwáa**) closes (**sāan mǎhn**)
- 9 Ask where you can buy a train ticket (**fóchē fēi**)
- 10 Ask why the door is closed (**sāan-jó**)

Exercise 24.3

Ask for directions in a polite way by starting with **Chéng mahn** 'May I ask':

- 1 How to get to Kowloon Tong MTR station (**Gáulèhngtòhng deihhtí jaahm**)
- 2 How to get to the Chek Lap Kok Airport (**Chek Laph Gok Gēichèuhng**)
- 3 Where is the restroom (**sáisáugāan**)/toilet (**chísó**)?
- 4 How to get to the top floor (**déng láu**)?
- 5 How to get to the post office (**yàuh-gúk**)?
- 6 Where are the restaurants (**chǎantēng**) in this hotel (**jaudim**)?
- 7 Which bus goes to the Star Ferry (**Tinsing Máhtàuh**)?
- 8 Which ferry (**syáhn**) goes to the Discovery Bay (**Yàhgíng-wāan**)?
- 9 Where is the nearest supermarket? (**jeui káhn ge chiukáp-síhchèuhng**)?
- 10 Where is the minibus station (**símbā jaahm**)?

UNIT TWENTY-FIVE

Sentence particles

Sentence particles are one of the most challenging features of Cantonese for learners of the language. Without them, many Cantonese sentences sound incomplete, abrupt, or even impolite. Cantonese has a rich repertoire of particles which serve a variety of communicative functions in different speech contexts, and are probably best learnt from direct experience. Below we introduce some of the most basic and frequently used particles, bearing in mind that there are altogether some thirty particles in use.

Perhaps the most basic particle is **a**, because of its importance for politeness and in asking questions. It is the most common, and most neutral, of the sentence particles, serving to soften the force of a statement or question.

a is regularly used in questions, as we have seen in Units 23–24:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Léih heui-mh-heui kéuih úkkéi a? | Are you going to his house? |
| Kéuih haish-mhaish jyuh hái Sâihm a? | Does she live in Shatin? |
| Ngóhdeih heui hōndouh síhk-faahn a? | Where shall we go to eat? |

a can also be used in affirmative sentences, for example, to soften the force of a negative response (see Unit 24):

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| A: Léih haish-mhaish msyúfuhk a? | Are you sick? |
| B: Mhaish a | No |

mē is used in a particular kind of question, expressing surprise or the unexpected:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Léih nàh jī mē? | Don't you know? |
| Ngóhdeih nàh gau mē? | Don't we have enough? |

(**mē** should not be confused with the Mandarin question particle **ma**, which has no real counterpart in Cantonese.)

Another important particle is **ge**, which appears in assertions, especially together with **haih** (see Unit 7):

Kéuih jəuh wuhsih ge	She's a nurse
or Kéuih haih jəuh wuhsih ge	
Ngóh séung hōng kéuih ge	I want to help her
or: Ngóh haih séung hōng kéuih ge	

jē serves to play down the extent or significance of something:

Géi baak mǎn jē	It's just a few hundred dollars
Hóu yùhngyih jē	It's really pretty easy
Ngóhdeih heui wáan háh jē	We're just going to have some fun

la adds a sense of current relevance to the statement. It is comparable to Mandarin **le**, although rather less widely used. It occurs especially with the perfective aspect **-jó** and other particles expressing completion such as **hóu** and **yùhn**:

Kéuihdeih lèih-jó-fān hóu loih la	They have been divorced for some time
Kéuih bún jìhjúm sé hóu la	Her autobiography is written up
Ngóh tái yùhn go bougon la	I've finished (reading) the report

lā and **ā** are used primarily in imperatives and requests (see Units 26–27):

Léih síusām dī lā	Do be careful
Mgói bái bái séui ngóh ā	(Give me) a glass of water, please

Of the two, **lā** is rather more insistent while **ā** is more neutral.

Particle combinations

The expressive range of particles is greatly increased by combinations. **ge**, for example, can be followed by almost any particle:

Gó tou dihsih-kehk jəuh yùhn	That soap opera has finished now
<i>ge la</i>	
Kéuih góng-sín ge jē	He's only joking
Léih yihwàih ngóh sòh ge mē?	Do you think I'm stupid?

In this way three or more particles can readily occur together.

Léih sîk louh ge la mē?

Do you (really) know the way?

Kéuih haih sūbohkh-sāang lèihge je wo!

She's only a primary school student, you know!

Normally the particles have their usual contributions, so that rather than learning how to use, say, the combination **ge la**, the learner should concentrate on individual particles and the combinations will tend to look after themselves.

Contractions: ge + a = ga

This contraction of two particles already introduced illustrates another way in which particles combine. Take a typical statement ending with **ge**:

Nī go bougou haih kéuih sé ge

(*lit.* this report is he wrote)

It was him who wrote this report

Kéuih haih sing Làhm ge

(*lit.* he is surnamed Lam)

His surname is Lam

Putting these sentences into question form, which requires the particle **a**, we end up with **ga**:

Nī go bougou haih-mhaih kéuih sé ga? Was it him who wrote this report?

(not * **Nī go bougou haih-mhaih kéuih sé ge a?**)

Kéuih haih-mhaih sing Làhm ga? Is his surname Lam?

(not * **Kéuih haih-mhaih sing Làhm ge a?**)

Similarly **lèihge**, itself a combination of **lèih** and **ge**, becomes **lèihga** in questions through fusion with **a**:

Nī go ngóh pàhngyáuh lèihge This is my friend

Haih-mhaih léih pàhngyáuh lèihga? Is he your friend?

Exercise 25.1

Add an appropriate particle at the end of each sentence (choose from **jē, lā, la, ge, ga, lèihga**):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Dī mihn sikh dāk _____ | The noodles are ready to eat |
| 2 Dī mihn mih sikh dāk _____ | The noodles cannot be eaten
(are inedible) |
| 3 Ngóh jihngheih tái-káh _____ | I'm just looking |
| 4 Ngóh sailóu jowh wuñghuisi _____ | My younger brother is an
accountant |
| 5 Làahmyán heih gám ge _____ | Men are like that |
| 6 Mgoi léih bōng ngóh sé _____ | Please write it for me |
| 7 Ngóhdeih yihgíng fān-jó-sáu _____ | We've already split up |
| 8 Nī go heih tinchòih yihthuhg _____ | This is a child prodigy, you see |
| 9 Léih hōisām dī _____ | (Try to) be happier! |
| 10 Kéuh jaang ngóh hóu sáu chín _____ | He owes me very little money |

Exercise 25.2

Add an appropriate particle to complete the following questions (choose from **a, mē, ga, lèihga**):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Léih giu matyéh méng _____? | What is your name? |
| 2 Nī go matyéh _____? | What is this? |
| 3 Dím wúih gam gwai _____? | How come it's so expensive? |
| 4 Gāmyah heih Sīnghèih Yáht _____? | Is it really Sunday today? |
| 5 Léih yám-mh-yám yéh _____? | Will you have a drink? |
| 6 Géidim gin gaau-sauh _____? | What time do we see the
professor? |
| 7 Léih nh sikh jā-chē ge _____? | Don't you know how to drive? |
| 8 Heih-mheih léih sé _____? | Was it you who wrote it? |

Exercise 25.3

Match the sentence with the translation based on the particle:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Kéuh séung bōng léih ge | a He only wants to help you |
| 2 Kéuh séung bōng léih mē | b He wants to help you |
| 3 Kéuh séung bōng léih jē | c Does he really want to help you? |
| 4 Léih góng béi kéuh tēng lā | d Are you going to tell her? |
| 5 Léih wúih góng béi kéuh tēng me | e Would you really tell her? |

- 6 Léih wúh-mh-wúh góng héi kéuh f Why don't you tell her?
teng a
- 7 Kéuhdeih git-jó-fān ge la mē g Are they married?
- 8 Kéuhdeih git-jó-fān ge la h What, they're married?
- 9 Kéuhdeih git-jó-fān meih a i They're already married

UNIT TWENTY-SIX

Imperatives

Imperatives are a type of sentence telling someone to act, as in commands and requests. While English drops the subject pronoun in imperatives, Cantonese typically retains it:

Léih bōng-sáu lā
(lit. you help hand)
Help me

Léih joi góng yāt chí ā
(lit. you again say one time)
Repeat (that) once more

Léihdeih gān ngóh làih lā
(lit. you follow me come)
Come with me

Note that a particle such as **lā** or **ā** is needed to distinguish an imperative from a statement; of the two, **lā** is more insistent and **ā** more neutral. The pronoun **léih** can be dropped, especially in emergencies, but this is less usual than in English and tends to be less polite:

Dá dihnwá bōngíng lā!	Call the police!
Faai di hoi mǎhn lā!	Hurry up and open the door!
Gau mehng a!	Help!

To make a request more polite, **ngōi** 'please' can be added at the beginning or end of the sentence (see Unit 27):

Mgōi léih góng daaih sēng dī ā?	Could you speak louder?
Léih làih jip ngóh ā, ngōi?	Could you come and pick me up, please?

Note the use of **bōng** (*lit.* 'help') meaning to do something for another's benefit, which is often used in imperatives:

Léih bōng ngóh sé lā

(*lit.* you help me write)

Write it for me, will you? (not: *Help me write it)

Mgõi léih bōng ngóh hoi dang ā?

(*lit.* please you help me open light)

Would you turn on the light for me?

Although **bōng** on its own can mean 'help', in this construction it means that the addressee is expected to perform the action himself/herself.

Adjectives too can be used in imperatives, but call for the use of **đi** (*lit.* 'a little'):

Léih súsám dĩ lā!

Be careful!

Mgõi léih sǐngmuhk dĩ lā!

Please try to be smart!

Léihdeih láahngjǐhng dĩ lā!

Calm down a bit!

Compare the use of **đi** in comparatives (see Unit 12) and similarly with adverbial constructions (see Unit 10):

Léih hah chí jyú dǎk hóu-sihk dĩ lā!

(*lit.* you next time cook good-to-eat more)

Can you cook a bit better next time?

Léih jǎp dǎk jeng dĩ lā!
(colloquial)

Try to dress better!

Mgõi léih góng dǎk maahn dĩ lā!

Please speak a bit more slowly!

Léih faai dĩ jǎp yéh jáu!

Hurry up and pack to leave!

Prohibitions: mhóu

Negative imperatives are marked by **mhóu** 'don't' (*lit.* 'no good') between the subject and the verb. Here the pronoun can be freely omitted:

Mhóu heui lā

Don't go

(**Léih**) **mhóu jáu jyh**

Don't leave yet

(**Léihdeih**) **mhóu aai-gān lā**

Don't argue

Again the pattern is applicable to adjectives too, often with **gam** 'so'

Mhóu gam bēigwām la!

Don't be so pessimistic!

(Léih) mhóu gam sèungsām lā!	Don't be so sad!
(Léihdeih) mhóu chòuh lā!	Don't be (so) noisy!

Similarly with adverbial constructions:

(Léih) mhóu jà dāk gam faai lā!	Don't drive so fast
(Léih) mhóu tō gam loiñ lā!	Don't delay too long

An alternative marker for negative imperatives is **máih**, usually used without the pronoun:

Máih chòuh lā!	Don't be (so) noisy!
(Léih) máih jáu jyuh!	Don't go yet!
Máih chéut sēng lā!	(lit. don't produce (a) sound) Shut up!

As these examples suggest, commands with **máih** tend to be more abrupt or impatient than those with **mhóu**, and used when there is a close relationship between the speaker and addressee.

First person imperatives: let's . . .

A different kind of imperative is the first person plural ('let's . . .'). Here the pronoun **ngóhdeih** ('we') may be retained or dropped:

Ngóhdeih fān heui sīn	Let's go back
Jáu lā!	Let's go!
Yāichāih sīh lā	Let's eat together

The adverb **bāiyùh** 'rather' is often added here, before or after **ngóhdeih**:

Bāiyùh ngóhdeih heui wáan lā!	Why don't we go and have some fun!
Ngóhdeih bāiyùh jáu dĩ jáu ā	Let's leave early

Negative counterparts can be formed by adding **mhóu** before the verb, just as for second-person imperatives:

Ngóhdeih mhóu gam sām-gāp lā	Let's not be so impatient
Ngóhdeih bāiyùh mhóu góng kéuih lā	Let's not talk about him

Exercise 26.1

Add a particle to the following statements to form imperatives

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Léih sé-seun béi ngóh | Write to me |
| 2 Léih fuai di fāan ūk kái | Come home quickly |
| 3 Maahn-máan hàahng | Walk slowly |
| 4 Siusām gwo máhlouh | Cross the street carefully |
| 5 Jíkhāuk béi chín | Pay immediately |
| 6 Yám dô di séui | Drink more water |
| 7 Jáu di fong gūng | Get off work as early as you can |
| 8 Tàuh ngóh yāt piu | Vote for me |
| 9 Dáng ngóh yāt jahn | Wait for me a while |
| 10 Lám chingchó di | Think more clearly |

Exercise 26.2

Make negative counterparts of the imperatives given:

Example: Léih sáun mǎhn lǎ Close the door, will you? → Léih mǎuh sáun mǎhn lǎ

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Léih hoi chéung lǎ | Open the window, will you? |
| 2 Léih góng lohk heui lǎ | Carry on speaking, will you? |
| 3 Léih maaih-jó gāan ūk lǎ | Sell the house, will you? |
| 4 Léih síhk yeuhk lǎ | Take the medicine, will you? |
| 5 Léih góí tǎihmuhk lǎ | Change the topic, will you? |
| 6 Léihdeih gǎijuhk góng lǎ | Do carry on talking |
| 7 Ngóhdeih heni lǎ | Let's go |
| 8 Léihdeih fuai di kyutdihng lǎ | Hurry up and decide |
| 9 Léih bátyùh jyun gūng lǎ | Why don't you change your job? |
| 10 Ngóhdeih bátyùh bǎn ūk lǎ | Let's move house |

Exercise 26.3

Use bōng to make requests out of the following statements:

Example: só mǎhn lock the door (for me) → léih bōng ngóh só mǎhn ā

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 1 máaih sung | buy groceries (for me) |
| 2 gei seun | send the mail (for me) |

3	yíng séung	take a picture (for us)
4	gahm jōng	ring the bell (for him)
5	gāau hohkfai	pay tuition (for them)
6	jíng chē	fix the car (for us)
7	jouh daahn-gōu	make a cake (for her)
8	gyú-faahn	cook a meal (for us)
9	dehng geipin	book an air ticket (for me)
10	wán giing	find a job (for him)

Exercise 26.4

Form imperatives with the adjectives provided:

Example: tell someone to be happy (hōisām): Léih hōisām dī lā!

- 1 ask a friend to be more optimistic (lohk-gwām)
- 2 tell a guest not to be so polite (haakhei)
- 3 encourage a student to be diligent (kàhnlihk)
- 4 tell a child not to be so greedy (tāam-sām)
- 5 ask someone to be more civilized (sīmàhn)
- 6 tell someone not to be so proud (gin-ngouh)
- 7 ask someone to speak louder (daaih sēng)
- 8 ask your friend not to walk (hàahng) so fast (faai)
- 9 tell a friend not to dress (jeuk) so casually (chèuhbín)
- 10 ask your spouse not to be so stubborn (ngaahng-géng)

UNIT TWENTY-SEVEN

Requests and thanks

Polite requests

Requests typically use imperative sentences as introduced in Unit 26. To make a request in a polite way, **ngôi** 'please' is used either at the beginning or at the end of the utterance. Note that the particle **ă** or **lă** is necessary so that the request does not sound abrupt (see Units 25–26):

Mgôi búi húi yih chàh ngóh ă?	May I have a cup of hot tea, please?
Búi yăt go seunfũng ngóh ă, mgôi?	May I have an envelope, please?

Alternatively, **ngôi léih** is used with the pronoun **léih** present:

Mgôi léih búi fahh bouj ngóh ă?	May I have a newspaper, please?
Hàahng faai đi lă, mgôi léih	Walk faster, will you

Invitations which are a form of request are initiated by **chéng** which means 'invite':

Chéng yahp làih chók ă	Come in and have a seat, please
Chéng chók đái maahn-máan góng ă	Sit down and talk slowly, please

Compare also the polite formulation **Chéng mahn** 'May I ask' (Unit 24).

Thanks

Two different expressions mean 'thank you': **ngôi** and **đôjeh**. These cause some difficulty for the English speaker since the precise distinction between the two is not easily drawn, while **ngôi** also means 'please'. **ngôi** is used as a response to small favours such as opening the window, picking up a book from the floor, serving drinks or food:

- A: **Ngóh bōng léih ló lá** Let me carry it for you (*lit* help you to carry it)
 B: **Mgòi** Thanks

Note here a common source of misunderstanding: while **bōng** literally means 'help', in a sequence of verbs like the above it generally means to do something *for* someone.

mgòi saai 'thank you very much' is stronger, with the particle **saai** 'all' added for emphatic effect:

- A: **Yám dō dĩ tōng ā?** Have more soup, please?
 B: **Hóu ā, mgòi saai** Sure, thanks very much
 A: **Ngóh bōng léih hoi mahn lá** Let me open the door for you
 B: **Léih léih dāk hóu hahp sít, mgòi saai** You came at the right time. Thanks very much

dōjeh is used to thank people for gifts and unexpected favours. Examples include presents and invitations:

- A: **Sung bái léih ge** This is for you (giving someone a present)
 B: **Dōjeh** Thank you
 A: **Gāmyah! ngóh chéng sít-k-lahn** Lunch is on me today
 B: **Dōjeh saai!** Thanks very much!
 (alternatively B can insist on paying: **Ngóh chéng lá!** Let me pay!)

It also includes what might be considered metaphorical gifts, such as compliments and congratulations:

- A: **Gūnghéi léih wó!** Congratulations!
 B: **Dōjeh!** Oh, thank you

Alternatively, the compliment can be played down in accordance with traditional Chinese modesty:

- A: **Léih gāmyah! jeuk dāk gam leng gé!**
 (*lit.* you today dress manner so beautiful)
 You're looking great today!
 B: **Mhahh saak**
 Not really

Thanks of any kind can be replied to with **msái** (**mgòi/dōjeh**) or **msái haakhei** all of which mean 'no need' (see Unit 20):

- A: Dójeŋ léih béi ngóh ge jíchíh Thank you for your support
 B: Msái haakhei Not at all

Apologies

deui-mjyuh 'sorry' is a general apology, appropriate for minor inconveniences such as accidentally running into somebody, but also for major offences.

Deui-mjyuh, ngóh tauhsín m̃h yínggōi faat pèihhei ge
 Sorry, I shouldn't have got angry just now

deui-mjyuh literally means 'cannot face' and can take an object representing the person wronged, which may come after **deui-mjyuh** or between **deui** 'face' and **mjyuh**:

Ngóh gokdāk hón deui-mjyuh ōkkéi-yáhu
 I feel I cannot face my family (after what I've done)
Ngóh jánhaíh deui-mjyuh kéuih
 I really feel bad about what I've done to him
 (or **Ngóh jánhaíh deui kéuih mjyuh**)

mhóuyisi (*lit.* '[I'm] embarrassed') is appropriate for matters such as misunderstandings and minor failures to meet expectations:

Mhóuyisi, seuhdōuh sāk-ché, sóyŋ ngóh chih dou
 I'm sorry, the tunnel was jammed, that's why I'm late

Mhóuyisi, ngóh lánh-jó fūng seun hái ōkkéi
 Sorry, I left the letter at home

ngōi je-gwo is used to apologize for pushing through a crowd.

Exercise 27.1

Formulate the following requests using **ngōi**:

- 1 Give me a menu (**jēung chānpái**)
- 2 Speak slower (**maahn dī**)
- 3 Say it again (**joi ... yat chí**)
- 4 Write faster (**faai dī**)
- 5 Don't turn on (**hōi**) the air conditioning (**lāuhnghei**)

- 6 Close (*sān mǎnh*) the door (*douh mǎnh*)
- 7 Ask the students to come
- 8 Call the police (*gíngcheat*)
- 9 Don't waste money (*sāi chún*)
- 10 Give me the bill (*dān*)

Exercise 27.2

Make the following requests more polite by inserting **chéng** 'invite' at the beginning of the sentence and adding an appropriate particle:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Lāuh dāi hám sena | Leave a message (as on an answering machine or voicemail) |
| 2 Gaijuhk góng lohk hemi | Continue talking again |
| 3 Dáng ngóh yāt jahn | Wait for me a little while |
| 4 Tungji ngóhdeih jei sán sūsik | Inform us of the latest news |
| 5 Séuhng tòih lǎhng jéung | Go on the stage to get the award |
| 6 Lāuhsám tēng syū | Listen to the lecture attentively |
| 7 Gān-jyuh ngóh hàahng | Follow me |
| 8 Gwo lǎih nǎih chók | Come and have a seat over here |
| 9 Béi jéung gēipiu ngóh tái | Show me your (air) ticket |
| 10 Sé dāi léih ge deihji tūhng dīnwá houhmáh | Write down your address and telephone number |

Exercise 27.3

Choose **ngoi** or **dōjeh** to thank someone for the following:

- 1 A friend opens the door for you
- 2 An acquaintance has treated you to dinner at a restaurant
- 3 A group of colleagues present you with a leaving present
- 4 A waiter hands you the menu
- 5 A colleague compliments you on your dress/suit
- 6 Someone calls you to the phone
- 7 Someone offers to give you a ride
- 8 When you're the seller having sold something to a client, customer
- 9 Someone you don't know has helped you with directions to your destination
- 10 Your boss congratulates you on your performance

Exercise 27.4

Express apologies as appropriate for the following situations:

- 1 You arrive very late for a formal business meeting
- 2 You inadvertently step on someone's toes
- 3 You forgot to return someone's call
- 4 You failed to do something very important as promised
- 5 You are pushing your way into the lift
- 6 You sincerely regret what you have done to someone
- 7 You're only a few minutes late. Your friends are waiting for you
- 8 You made a terrible mistake, causing your company to suffer a loss of profit
- 9 You have missed a deadline, causing some inconvenience
- 10 You have missed an important appointment

UNIT TWENTY-EIGHT

Numbers, dates and times

Lucky numbers

Our last unit, twenty-eight, falls appropriately enough on a lucky number: two (**yih**) sounds like 'easy' and eight (**baat**) rhymes with **faat** meaning 'make money, prosper' as in the Chinese New Year greeting **Gūnghéi faat chòih**, literally 'congratulations (and may you) prosper'. By contrast, four (**sei**) is an unlucky number as it rhymes with **séi** 'die' and is consequently subject to taboo: the Alfa Romeo 164 (**yāt luhk sei**) was perceived to be uncomfortably close to **yāt loub séi** ('one – road – die') so that it was renumbered for the Hong Kong market as the 168 (**yāt luhk baat/yāt loub faat** 'one – road – prosper').

Cardinal numbers

The number system is decimal and highly regular – so much so that it has been claimed to give the Chinese an advantage in mathematical tasks.

1 yāt	11 sah-p-yāt	21 yih-sah-p-yāt (yah/yeh-yāt)
2 yih	12 sah-p-yih	22 yih-sah-p-yih (yah/yeh-yih, etc.)
3 sāam	13 sah-p-sāam	23 yih-sah-p-sāam
4 sei	14 sah-p-sei	24 yih-sah-p-sei
5 ngēh	15 sah-p-ngēh	25 yih-sah-p-ngēh
6 luhk	16 sah-p-luhk	26 yih-sah-p-luhk
7 chāt	17 sah-p-chāt	27 yih-sah-p-chāt
8 baat	18 sah-p-baat	28 yih-sah-p-baat
9 gáu	19 sah-p-gáu	29 yih-sah-p-gáu
10 sah-p	20 yih-sah-p	30 sāam-sah-p
100 yāt baak	1,000,000 yāt baak maahn	
1,000 yāt chūn	10,000,000 yāt chūn maahn	
10,000 yāt maahn	100,000,000 yāt yik (as used in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange)	

Note some abbreviations:

- In combinations, **yih-sahp** (20) may become **yah-** or **yeh-**:

Kéuih jauhlèih yah sei ge la	She's almost twenty (years old)
Yah-sei siusih yihstsin	Twenty four hour hotline
Yeh-ngh mahn, ngoi	Twenty-five dollars, please

- In numbers from thirty onwards, the word **sahp** 'ten' is often reduced to **ah** as in **sà'ah-yāt** 'thirty-one', and so on.

Ngóh yáuh géu'ah-baat go hohksāang
I have ninety-eight students

Kéuih sèhng sei'ah sei dōu mei git-fān
He's already forty but still not married

Numbers over a hundred precede the lower numbers as follows:

120	yāt baak yih-sahp (or simply: baak yih)
1,400	yāt chīn sei baahk (<i>chīn sei</i>)
15,000	yāt maahn ngh chīn (<i>maahn ngh</i>)

The difficulty comes above 10,000, **yāt maahn**. Above this figure Cantonese speakers count in terms of **maahn**, not **chīn** (1,000):

42,000	sei maahn yih chīn
360,000	sāamsahp-luhk maahn

Zero is **lihng**. It is used in numbers with zero at the beginning or between digits:

0.8	lihng dīm haat (<i>lit.</i> nought point eight)
306	sāam baak lihng luhk (<i>lit.</i> three hundred zero six)

Two: **yih** or **léuhng**?

There are two words meaning 'two':

- yih** is used in counting and quoting numbers, days, etc.:

yih yuht yih hōuh	the second of February
daih yih chí	the second time (<i>lit.</i> number two time)
daih yih doih	the second generation

- **léuhng** is used, together with the classifier, in referring to a number of items:

léuhng go yàhn	two people
léuhng gihn sām	two shirts

In a few instances either **yih** or **léuhng** can be used, for example, when the numbers 200, 2,000 and 20,000 are used before a noun:

yih/léuhng baak mām	two hundred dollars
yih/léuhng chün bohng	two thousand pounds
yih/léuhng maahn yàhn	twenty thousand people

Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers are formed, also in a highly regular way, by putting **daih** before the number:

daih yāt	first
daih yih	second (idiomatically also means 'another')
daih sām saigaaí	the third world
daih lukh luhggám	the sixth sense

Dates

Dates are also based on a highly regular system:

- days of the week are numbered one to six from **síngkèih yāt** (Monday) to **síngkèih lukh** (Saturday) with the exception of **síngkèih yaht** (Sunday);
- the months are numbered from **yāt yuht** (January) through to **sahpyih yuht** (December). Note the following pairs which are similar in form but very different in meaning:

síngkèih yāt	Monday	vs.	síngkèih yaht	Sunday
sām yuht	March	vs.	sām go yuht	three months
sahpyāt yuht	November	vs.	sahpyāt go yuht	eleven months

The order in dates is the reverse of the English, going from the general to the specific, beginning with the year and ending with the day, expressed by the number followed by **houh**. The formula is thus: **X lān Y yuht Z houh**:

e.g. September 3rd	gáu yuht sām houh
August 28	baat yuht yihsahp-baat houh
March 10, 1998	yāt gáu gáu baat fih sām yuht sah houh
June 30, 2001	yih fihng fihng yāt fih lohk yuht sāmshp houh

Times

The hours of day are expressed by **dím jūng** 'o'clock' or **dím** alone as follows:

X dím (jūng)	e.g. baat díng (jūng)	eight o'clock
	sahp-yih díng (jūng)	twelve o'clock
X dím bun	e.g. léuhng díng bun	half past two, 2.30
	sahp-yih díng bun	half past twelve, 12.30
X dím Y fān	e.g. yāt díng sah pān	1.10
	lohk díng seishp-ngh fān	6.45

To indicate points between the hours, Cantonese speakers colloquially use **jih** (5-minute intervals, or divisions of the clock face):

3.05	sām díng yāt go jih	(or simply: sām díng yāt)
3.10	sām díng léuhng go jih	(or: sām díng yih)
3.15	sām díng sām go jih	(or: sām díng sām)

For units less than ten minutes, **fihng** 'zero' is usually inserted between **dím** and **fān** in the formula **X díng fihng Y fān**:

7.04	chāt díng fihng sei fān
9.08	gáu díng fihng baat fān

Seconds are expressed by **míuh** in the form **dím Y fān Z míuh**:

1.03.09	yāt díng sām fān gáu míuh
8.12.16	baat díng sah p-yih fān sah-lohk míuh

To specify a.m. or p.m., the word for morning, and so on, precedes the time:

seuhngjau	morning	seuhngjau sah p díng bun	10.30 a.m.
hahjau	afternoon	hahjau sei díng jūng	4.00 p.m.
yehmáahn	evening	yehmáahn gáu díng	9.00 p.m.

Notice how the general term precedes the particular, as we saw in the case of dates above. This also applies to addresses, which thus follow the opposite order to English:

Héunggóng Mósingléhng Douh ngáhsahp-luhk hoeh sāau láu B joh
Flat B, Third floor, 56 Mt Davis Road, Hong Kong

Gáulúhng Jimsájeui Gánàhfūn Douh sahphaat hoeh deihhá
Ground floor, 18 Carnarvon Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon

Exercise 28.1

Read the following numbers in Cantonese:

1 34	6 1,200
2 79	7 12,000
3 106	8 24,302
4 234	9 43,545
5 818	10 315,000

Exercise 28.2

Read the following dates in Cantonese:

1 January 1	6 July 4, 1963
2 December 12	7 June 30, 1997
3 May 21	8 December 31, 1999
4 August 9	9 February 29, 2000
5 Friday 13	10 September 15, 2008

Exercise 28.3

Match the following times:

1 2.25	a saphyāt dím sahþ
2 1.10	b sāam dím sāam
3 4.30	c gáu dím bun
4 5.40	d chāt dím yihsahp-luhk fān
5 12.45	e haat dím yāt
6 8.05	f yāt dím yih
7 3.15	g ngēh dím haat

8 11.50	h léuhng dím ng̃h
9 7.26	i sei dím bun
10 9.30	j sahpyih dím gáu

Exercise 28.4

Practise giving the following information:

- 1 today's date (gǎmyaht ge yahtkèih)
- 2 your birthday (sāangyaht)
- 3 your date of birth (chēut sāng yahtkèih)
- 4 your telephone number at home (ūkkéi dīhnwá) and at work (gūngsī dīhnwá)
- 5 your address (deihjī)

Exercise 28.5

Choose an auspicious registration number for your car and explain why it is a good choice for you.

KEY TO EXERCISES

Unit 1 Consonants

Exercise 1.2 Aspiration: the second of each pair begins with an aspirated consonant.

Exercise 1.3 1 Jěung 2 Jinh 3 Gwān 4 Ding 5 Sám 6 Jǔng
7 Dauh Ou 8 Laih Ji Gok 9 Jěung Gwān Ou 10 Sāaugēlwān
11 Dauh Gok Jéui 12 Sām Séui Bóu

Unit 2 Vowels and diphthongs

Exercise 2.1 gān should sound like English 'gun', fān like 'fun', etc., while gāan, fāan, etc., should rhyme with 'barn' without the 'r' being sounded.

Unit 3 Tone

Exercise 3.4 1 haahmún 2 yàuhfú 3 buayé 4 sūayé 5 Dākmán
6 tūpáng 7 sām jek díp 8 Oumún 9 yahp-yáu 10 fáyún

Unit 4 Pronouns

Exercise 4.1 1 Ngóh jyuh hái Gáulùhng 2 Hóu hōisām gin dóu léih
3 Ngóhdeih sīk kéuihdeih 4 Léih haih go hóu yīsāng 5 Léihdeih
haih hohksaang 6 Kéuih hóu jūngyi yām-ngohk 7 Ngóh dá-jó-dihnwá
béi lóuhbáan 8 Kéuihdeih heni-gwo Oumún 9 Kéuih geidāk ngóh
10 Kéuihdeih hóu gwa-jyuh ngóhdeih

Exercise 4.2 1 kèuih 2 kèuih 3 kèuihdeih 4 kèuih 5 kèuihdeih
6 kèuihdeih 7 kèuih 8 kèuihdeih 9 ngóhdeih 10 léihdeih

Exercise 4.3 1 Jūngyi a/nàh jūngyi a/Mhahí gèi jūngyi a (Ngóh 'I' is redundant) 2 (Kàhmyah) hóu yih a/lohk yúh a 3 Ngóh hóiyih 4 Tóuh-ngoh a/nàh tóuh-ngoh a 5 Jáu-jó la/meih (jáu) a 6 Béi ngóh 7 Maaíh-jó la/meih (maai) a 8 Leng a/nàh leng ge 9 Jíng hóu la/meih (jíng hóu) a 10 Yáuh a/móuh a

Unit 5 Possession: ge

Exercise 5.1 1 léih go beih 2 kèuih ge/dí pàhngyáuh 3 kèuih deui ngáahn 4 kèuih jèung tóí 5 ngóh ge/dí seun 6 kèuih go sáudóí 7 ngóh jek geuk 8 Hèunggóng ge tinhei 9 gāmyah ge/dí sāmán 10 tīngyáht ge heiwán

Exercise 5.2 1 Léih deui hàuih hóu leng wo 2 Léih gíh lâu géi dō chín a? 3 Hèunggóng go gēichèuhng hóu daaih ga 4 Ngóh ga páauché waiih-jó 5 Ngóh dī chànbik làih taam ngóh 6 Ngóh taaitái dāng-gán ngóh 7 Ngóh go jái jūngyi cheung-gō 8 Ngóh dī jái léui dūhk-gán jūng hohk

Exercise 5.3 1 Ní jek sáubiú (haih) ngóh ge 2 Go gongkàhm (haih) kèuih ge 3 Gó gām úk (haih) kèuihdeih ge 4 Ní dī syū (haih) léih (deih) ge 5 Gó dī wá (haih) Chàhm Síujé ge 6 Ní go wái (haih) ngóhdeih ge 7 Ní go baahn-gūng-sāt (haih) Lám Sínsāng ge 8 Dī chín (haih) ngóh taaitái ge

Unit 6 Possession and existence: yáuh

Exercise 6.1 1 Ngóh móuh yigín 2 Léih yáuh-móuh beimaht a? 3 Gāmyah móuh siusik 4 Faatgwok yáuh-móuh Jūnggwokyáhn a? 5 Chéutbihn yáuh yáhn 6 Kénih móuh behng 7 Léih yáuh-móuh láihmaht a? 8 Bón syū móuh Jūngmàhnjìh 9 Sāihá yáuh-móuh fóchē-jaahm a? 10 Kàhmyah yáuh taaiyèuhng

Exercise 6.2 1 Yáuh a/Móuh a 2 Yáuh a (ngóh yáuh gèi go)/Móuh a (yāt go dōu móuh) 3 Yáuh a/Móuh a 4 Yáuh a/Móuh a/Juhng meih yáuh a 5 Yáuh gé, daahnhaih nàh gau/Móuh māt a 6 Yáuh a (heui-gwo)/Móuh a (meih heui-gwo) 7 Yáuh a/móuh a 8 Yáuh a (hóu yáuh hingcheui)/Móuh a (móuh māt hingcheui)

Exercise 6.3 1 Léih yáuh-móuh cbē a? 2 Léih yáuh-móuh hīngdaih jímuih a? 3 Léih yáuh-móuh sáutàih dihnwá a? 4 Léih yáuh-móuh heui gwo Bākging a? 5 Kéuih yáuh-móuh taam-gwo léih a? 6 Nídouh móuh jeukjái 7 Hēunggóng yáuh hóu dōsúbā 8 Yahpbihh yáuh móuh yáhn a? 9 Fosāt (yahpbihh) yáuh móuh hohksāang a? 10 Gāmyaht yáuh móuh hóu sūsūk a?

Unit 7 Being: haih

Exercise 7.1 1 mhaih a 2 haih a 3 mhaih a 4 haih a 5 mhaih a 6 mhaih a 7 haih a 8 haih a 9 haih a 10 mhaih a 11 haih a 12 haih a

Exercise 7.2 1 haih 2 haih 3 hái 4 hái 5 huìh 6 haih 7 hái 8 haih 9 hái 10 haih

Exercise 7.3 1 Haih lóuhbáam góng bái ngóh tēng ge 2 Haih ngóh bái bún syū léih ge 3 Kéuih haih gām jīu jáu ge 4 Gíhn sām haih géisih máaih ge 5 Go chéung haih bíngō hōi ge? 6 Ngóh haih hái nídouh dáng léih ge 7 Haih kéuih tsaitái wán dóu ge 8 Kéuih haih hái Tsáigwok jōhng chē ge

Unit 8 Noun Classifiers

Exercise 8.1 1 gām (catty) 2 dā (dozen) 3 fūng 4 bóhng (pound) 5 dyuhn (portion, segment) 6 hūi (glass)/jī (bottle) 7 dei (pair) 8 tou (set)

Exercise 8.2 1 Mgoi léuhng hūi hūhng jáu 2 Mgoi yāt dihp cháau mihn 3 Mgoi sām wán faahn 4 Mgoi (bái) dō dei faaijī 5 Mgoi bái jéuu séui 6 Mgoi bái yāt jéung/go cháanpái ngóh 7 Mgoi léuhng go jáu-būi 8 Mgoi yāt wáh yih séui 9 Mgoi yāt gihn daahn-gōu 10 Mgoi yāt bú gáfē

Exercise 8.3 (A) 1b 2d 3e 4c 5a (B) 1b 2d 3e 4a 5c

Exercise 8.4 1c 2a 3e 4b 5d

Unit 9 Adjectives

Exercise 9.1 1 Kéuih hóu leng pretty/hó-oi lovely/lêk smart
 2 Kéuihdeih hóu yáih naughty/gwāai nice, obedient/chūngmìhng clever
 3 Kéuih hóu lâk smart/yáuh hohkmahn learned/yáuh-méng famous
 4 Kéuih hóu làhnggon capable/kàhnlìk diligent/yáuh táihmaauh polite
 5 Ngóh hóu kàhnlìk diligent/yáuh seunsām confident 6 Kéuih hóu
 lengjái handsome/lengléni pretty/gōu tall 7 Ga chē hóu yáuh-yìhng
 stylish/taai gwai too expensive 8 hóu làhn-sìhk pretty bad/géi hóu-sìhk
 quite good 9 Tinhei hóu sūp humid/taai yíht too hot 10 Bún síusyut
 hóu chéuhng long/géi hóu-tái quite good (to read)

Exercise 9.2 1 hóu sai small/daai big/syūfuhk comfortable ge haak-
 tēng 2 hóu pèhng cheap/gwai expensive/dái-sìhk good value/ge
 chāantēng 3 hóu yāumahk humorous/hóu muhn boring ge syū 4 hóu
 dākyl cute/hó-oi lovely ge gáu-jái/māu-jái 5 hóu muhn boring/chéuhng
 long/gámyáhn moving ge hei 6 hóu làhn/sām difficult/yáuh-yuhng useful
 ge gūngfo 7 hóu yihmjuhng serious ge mahntàih 8 hóu yāumahk
 humorous/fuhjaakyahm responsible ge lóuh-sí

Exercise 9.3 1 Ngóhdeih géi (gau saai) múhnyi 2 Kéuih gam (taai,
 gau saai) lêk 3 Kéuihdeih taai (gam, gau saai) guik 4 Dī sailouhjái
 gam (géi, gau saai) dākyl 5 Tou hei gam (taai, gau saai) lohngmaahn 6
 Dī tauhfait taai (gam, gau saai) dyūn 7 Dī gāsi gam (géi, gau saai)
 pèhng 8 Go gauusauh gam (gau saai) yáuh-méng 9 Go hohksāng taal
 (gam, gau saai) láahn 10 Dī séung gam (géi, gau saai) leng

Exercise 9.4 1 Nī dīhp sung laht-láat-déi 2 Dī tōng syūn-syūn-déi
 3 Léih dī sām sūp-sūp-déi 4 Tinhei dung-dung-déi 5 Kéuih faai
 mihn yūhn-yūn-déi 6 Kéuih deui ngáahn hūhng-húng-déi 7 Kéuih
 go baahn-gūng-sāt tyūhn-lyūn-déi 8 Lāp láu sūng-sūng-déi 9 Léih fu
 ngáahn-géng mūhng-múng-déi 10 Léih lóuhgūng jeni-jéui-déi

Unit 10 Adverbs of manner

Exercise 10.1 1 Kéuihdeih mǎahn-mǎan hàahng fān ūkkéi 2 Kéuih
 hóu hīngfáhn gám ganisiah jīngéi 3 Kéuih hóu danik-dáam gám mahn-
 jó yāt go mahntàih 4 Kéuih hóu síusām gám só-jó douh mūhn 5 Ngóh
 go jái hóu faai gám waak-jó géi fūk wá 6 Kéuih hóu lóuhlik gám hohk-
 gán Gwóngdūng-wá 7 Dī hohksāng hóu làuhsām gám tēng-gán
 yín-góng 8 Dī Hēunggóng hohksāng hóu hīngsūng gám yēhng-jó
 béichoi 9 Yī-ngoih hóu dahtyihng gám faatsāng-jó 10 Ngóh jūngyi hoi-
 hoi-sām-sām gám hīngjūk sāangyaht

Exercise 10.2 1 Léih sé dāk hóu hóu 2 Ga fēigēi fēi dāk hóu dāi
3 Ngóhdeih fan dāk hóu syūfuhk 4 Kéuihdeih wáan dāk hóu hōisām
5 Kéuih tiu dāk hóu yúh 6 Kéuih ying-séung ying dāk hóu leng
7 Ngóh yauh-séui yauh dāk hóu maahn 8 Kéuih cheung-gō cheung dāk
hóu sai-sēng 9 Ngóh jyú-faahn jyú dāk hóu faai 10 Ngóh tiu-móuh tiu
dāk hóu chā

Exercise 10.3 1 hóu sūsām gám (carefully) 2 hóu yáuh-loihsing gám
(patiently) 3 hóu syūfuk gám (comfortably) 4 jīhng-júng gám (quietly)/hóu
láu gám (angrily) 5 hóu chingchó gám (clearly) 6 hóu faai gám
(quickly) 7 hóu daaih sēng gám (loudly) 8 hóu tauhsām gám (atten-
tively) 9 hóu hōisām gám (happily) 10 hóu séungsaam gám (sadly)

Unit 11 Adverbs of time

Exercise 11.1 (Note that the adverb can appear in more than one
position.) 1 (Kàhmyaht) ngóh (kàhmyaht) hái Jimsájéui 2 Kéuih
ngāam-ngāam dou-jó gēichēuhng/(Tàuhsin) kéuih (tàuhsin) dou-jó
gēichēuhng 3 (Yīhchihh) Ngóh (yīhchihh) gin-gwo kéuih 4
(Seuhngchi) kéuihdeih (seuhngchi) jung-jó tauh-jéung 5 (Gójahnsih)
ngóhdeih (gójahnsih) juhng sai 6 (Búnloh) ngóh (búnloh) jowh wuhsih
ge 7 (Hah chí) ngóhdeih (hah chí) wán léih 8 Kéuih jīkhāk hóu
láu 9 (Daih yīh sih/daih sih) ngóh (daih yīh sih/daih sih) chéng léih sihk-
faahn 10 (Yīhchihh) ngóhdeih (yīhchihh) hái Méihgwok jyuh-gwo

Exercise 11.2 1 Ngóh yāt go láihbaai dá yāt chí móhngkàuh (once a
week) 2 Ngóh yaht-yaht heui yauh-séui (everyday) 3 Ngóh máahn-
máahn tái dihnsih (every night) 4 Ngóh jiu-jiu tái boujī (every
morning) 5 Ngóh yāt go láihbaat tái sām chí tauh (three times a
week) 6 Ngóh yāt go yuht jín yāt chí tauhfaat (once a month) 7 Ngóh
yāt go láihbaai máaih yāt chí sung (once every week) 8 Ngóh yāt līh
beui géi chí yamngohk-wái (a few times a year) 9 Ngóh yāt go yuht sihk
yāt chí syutgōu (once a month) 10 Ngóh yāt go láihbaai taam yāt chí
chūnchīk (once a week)

Exercise 11.3 1 (Ngóh yaht-yaht) dá bun go jūngtāuh gēi 2 līh yāt
go jūngtāuh Gwóngdūng-wá 3 gōng sāmshp fānjūng dīhnwá 4 jyú
go bun jūngtāuh faahn 5 tēng sēhng máahn yám-ngohk 6 tái sēhng
yaht syū 7 kīng yāt jahn gāi 8 sēhng géi go jūngtāuh móhng 9 chūng
sahp fānjūng lēuhng 10 sé yāt go jūngtāuh yahtgei

Exercise 11.4 1 géi go jūngtāuh (a few hours) 2 sēhng máahn
(a whole evening) 3 yāt go hah-jau (one afternoon) 4 sēhng yaht (a

whole day) 5 *yāt go lāihbaai* (one week) 6 *gēi yaht* (a few days)
7 *sèhng jūn* (a whole morning) 8 *gēi māuh* (a few evenings) 9 *sèhng go yuht* (a whole month) 10 *gēi lān* (a few years)

Unit 12 Comparison

Exercise 12.1 1 *Dī Gāmyaht lyúhn dī* 2 *Dī: Kéuih yihgā hōisām dī*
3 *Gwo: Ngóh go pàhngyáuh daaih gwo ngóh* 4 *Gwo: Kéuih gōu gwo yihchihh hóu dō* 5 *Dī: Gām chí maahn dī* 6 *Gwo: Nī gāan chāantēng/jáulāuh pèhng gwo gó gāan* 7 *Gwo: Ngóh jūngyí tiu-móuh dō gwo cheung-gō* 8 *Dī: Léih ge lámfaat hóu dī*

Exercise 12.2 1 *Gāmyaht dung* (cold) *gwo kàhmyaht* 2 *Léuihjái gwāi* (well-behaved) *gwo làuhwái* 3 *Séutsām gwai* (expensive) *gwo lébngtāi* 4 *Dōlēuhndō* (juhug) *dung* (cold) *gwo Lèubndēun* 5 *Jūngmán làahn* (difficult) *gwo Yingmán* 6 *Yàuh-séui syūfuhk* (comfortable) *gwo páauh-bouh* 7 *Gwóngdōng choi chéutméng* (famous) *gwo Chìuhjāu choi* 8 *Jouh sāangyí sánfú* (hard) *gwo gaau-syū*

Exercise 12.3 1 *Gām-lín dung gwo gauh-tín hóu dō* 2 *Gāmyaht lyúhn hóu dō* 3 *Léih dī tànhfaat yihgā dyún siu-siu* 4 *Héunggóng gwai gwo nīdoh gēi páih* 5 *Ngóh juhng guih gwo kéuih* 6 *Sihk faahn juhng pèhng gwo sihk mihh* 7 *Gām chí hohkfai bēi seuhng chí gwai yāt baak mán* 8 *Kéuih gōu* (gwo) *ngóh sām chyun*

Exercise 12.4 A 1 *Hói-yú gwai gwo yéuhng-yú* 2 *Héungpín héung gwo hūhng chàh* 3 *Làahnfā leng gwo gūkfā* 4 *Go léui daaih* (gwo) *go jái léuhng seui* 5 *Nī bāan hohksāang kàbnlìhk gwo gó bāan*
B 1 *Gauh hàaih bēi sán bàaih syūfuhk* 2 *Yihgāheui Oujāu hēi yihchihh yùhngyih(-jō)* 3 *Gūngsī gām-lín bēi gauh-lín jaahn dāk dō(-jō)* 4 *Nī bún síusyut bēi daaih yāt bām hóu-tái* 5 *Léih gām chí bēi seuhng chí jouh dāk hóu(-jō)*

Unit 13 Prepositions

Exercise 13.1 1 *Hohksāang hái fóng yahpbihn/douh* 2 *Jek mǎu hái tóih seuhngbihn* 3 *Go jámtàuh hái chòhng seuhngbihn/douh* 4 *Jī bàt hái háp yahpbihn* 5 *Bún syū hái dang haahbihn* 6 *Go jūng hái chèuhng seuhngbihn* 7 *Bá jē hái mǎhn haahbihn* 8 *Dī séung hái séungbóu yahpbihn/douh* 9 *Pō syuh hái gāan uk chihnbihh* 10 *Dihnsihgēi hái syūgwaih jākbiu*

Exercise 13.2 1 chènghng hauhbihn 2 syügwaih seuhngmihn 3 ngàhn-hòhng deumihn 4 máhlóuh jüggān 5 gūngyún túhng yàuh jaahm jigān 6 (chóh) hái léih jākbin 7 háp yahpbihn/léuihmihn 8 hāanfóng chéutbihn 9 geng chihnmihn 10 tói hahmihn 11 heung ní go fōngheung/heung nibihn 12 yàuh jiu dou máahn

Exercise 13.3 1 Tói seuhngmihn yáuh yāt daahp syū (a pile of books) 2 Chèuhng seuhngmihn yáuh fúk wá (a picture) 3 Chyühfóng yahpbihn móuh yàhn (nobody) 4 Haak-tēng léuihmihn yáuh géi go haakyáhn (several guests) 5 Yigwaih yahpbihn yáuh hóu dô leng sām (lots of nice clothes) 6 Chòhng hahmihn yáuh jek mēau (a cat) 7 Dang hahbihn yáuh jī bāt (a pen/pencil) 8 Syügwaih seuhngmihn yáuh go gūngjái (a doll) 9 Sáisáu-gān yahpbihn yáuh tuih mōuhgān (a towel) 10 Syūfóng yahpbihn yáuh bouh dīnlóuh (a computer)

Exercise 13.4 1 yàuh nīdoh heui yīyún 2 yàuh tòuh-syū-gwún heui faahn-tòhng 3 yàuh deih-há heui baat láu 4 heung Gáulúhng 5 gīng Tòihbāk heui Dūnggōng 6 yàuh Hēunggōng gīng Maahn-gūk heui Lèuhndēun 7 yàuh syūfóng heui chyühfóng 8 yàuh daih yāt chí dou yihgā 9 yàuh gēichèuhng heui ùkkéi 10 yàuh tàuh dou méih

Unit 14 Negation

Exercise 14.1 1 Kéuih ùkkéi móuh mahatāih 2 Ngóhdeih mhaih hóu guih 3 Ngóh móuh sing-jik 4 Kéuih gihn sām mhaih hóu gwai 5 Ngóh tauhsin mónh síhk yeuhk 6 Yísāng móuh heui douh-ga 7 Lóuhbāan mhaih hóu láu 8 Dī hohksāng móuh séuhng-móhng 9 Dī hohksāng mhaih hóu kàhnlíhk 10 Gó tou heí mhaih tsai chéuhg

Exercise 14.2 1 Síhk hóisín hóu gwai (ga) 2 Wòhng Sāang chéng kéuih (a) 3 Ngóh (yáuh) dubk-gwo Faatmán (a) 4 Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān (la) 5 Ngóh bou-jó-méng (la) or Ngóh yáuh bou-méng (a) 6 Dī háausih tàihmuhk hóu làhn (a) 7 Gān fóng géi/hóu gōnjehng (a) 8 Kéuih yihga dākhàhn (a) 9 Gāmyaht yáuh tòhng 10 Ngóhdeih síhk-gwo sèh-gāng (a)

Exercise 14.3 1 māsūn not fresh, stale 2 māsūm careless 3 mhóuchói unfortunate 4 mgōehing discontented 5 mgīnhōng unhealthy 6 mjūngyi dislike 7 m-mūhngbaahk fail to understand 8 mtūhngyi disagree 9 m-yānséung not appreciate 10 mlāuhsūm inattentive

Exercise 14.4 A 1 Kéuih mhaih móuh seunsām 2 Kéuih góng ge yéh mhaih móuh douh-kéih 3 Léih gājē mhaih mē wúih bōng léih 4 Ngóhdeih mhaih mē gau chín 5 Léih gāmyaht mhaih mdākhaahn B 1 Ngóhdeih mhaih mēhngyi 2 Ngóhdeih mē hóiyh mē jáu 3 Gūngsī mhaih mē háng gā yāh-gūng 4 Ngóh mē wúih mgeidāk 5 Léih mhaih mēhng mē héi

Unit 15 Verbs of motion

Exercise 15.1 1 séuhng làih ngóh úkkéi 2 fān heui hohkhaauh 3 séuhng heui làuhseuhng 4 gwo làih Yīnggwok 5 lohk heui séjih-làuh 6 gwo làih tái-háh 7 fān làih taum ngóhdeih 8 yahp heui hoi-wái 9 lohk làih sihk-faahn 10 chéut heui jouh-yéh

Exercise 15.2 1 Ngóh tīngyaht heui hohkhaauh (to school) 2 Léih làih nīdouh (here) sihk-faahn 3 Ngóh gwo heui góbihn (there) wán yāhn 4 Léih dākhaahn séuhng làih ngóh úkkéi (my place) choh 5 Ngóhdeih yiu fēi fān heui Oujāu (to Australia) 6 Go léuhjái jáu chéut heui chéutbihn (outside) 7 Ngóh dī chānchik fān làih Hēunggóng (to Hongkong) douh-ga 8 Léih hóiyh lohk heui gwóng-chēuhng (to the shopping centre) mēhng yéh 9 Ngóh jīkhāk yahp heui sái-sáu-gān (bathroom) wuhn sām 10 Ngóh tūhngsih gwo làih ngóh gān fóng (to my room) kīng-gái

Exercise 15.3 1 gwo heui 2 yahp làih 3 lohk làih 4 séuhng heui 5 chéut heui 6 fān làih 7 lohk làih/heui 8 séuhng heui 9 yahp heui/làih 10 fān heui/làih

Exercise 15.4 1 Ga fochē fān-jó làih 2 Dī seun gei-jó heui Méihgwok 3 Dī gápiu sīng-jó séuhng heui gōu wái 4 Kéuih hái fóng hàahng-gán chéut làih 5 Kéuihdeih pāh-gán séuhng làih sāandēng 6 Bún syū dī-jó lohk (heui) deihhá 7 Go kām bün-jó gwo heui deui-mih 8 Ga chē hoi-gán yahp làih tīhng-chē-chēuhng 9 Kéuih hàahng-gán chéut heui gāi douh 10 Kéuihdeih bün-gán lohk heui yīh láu

Unit 16 Verbs of giving

Exercise 16.1 1 Bēi chín ngóh tsaitái (my wife) 2 Wāahn syū bēi tūnghohk (a classmate) 3 Sung láihmaht bēi kēuih-pāhngyáuh (one's girlfriend) 4 Gei seun bēi Léih haahjéung (Principal Li) 5 Dá-dihnwá bēi gíngchaat (the police) 6 Gām gūngfo bēi sīnsāng (teacher) 7 Làuh sung bēi ngóh (me) sihk 8 Mēhng sām bēi go léui (daughter)

jeuk 9 Gáan tou hei béi léih (you) tái 10 Dím gō béi ngóh pàhngyáuh
(my friend) tēng

Exercise 16.2 1 Kéuih sung-jó dĩ hēungséui béi ngóh 2 Yisāng béi-jó dĩ yeuhk ngóh (sihk) 3 Ngóh wóih wàahn (fāan) dĩ mǎhn-gín béi léih/Ngóh wóih béi fāan dĩ mǎhn-gín léih 4 Lóuhháan gyun-jó hóu dō chún béi gauwái 5 Kéuih gei-jó fūng seun béi kéuih úkkéi-yáhn 6 Ngóh je-jó jī yùhnbat béi kéuih 7 Mgoi béi-mín kéuih 8 Léih yiu wàahn (fāan) tiuh sósih béi ngóh/Léih yiu héi fāan tiuh sósih ngóh 9 Kéuih séung je ngóh léuhng bún syū/Kéuih séung tūhng ngóh je léuhng bún syū 10 Gō gōngsi béi-jó dĩ gūngfō ngóhdeih jōuh

Exercise 16.3 1 Ngóhdeih juhng yiu héi chún kéuih (to him) 2 Ngóh gājē je-jó ngóh hóu dō sām/je-jó hóu dō sām béi ngóh (to me) 3 Gō go yáhn sēhngyaht tǎu gūngsi (the company) yéh 4 Yáuh yáhn chéung-jó kéuih lóuhháan (his boss) hóu dō chún 5 Ngóh heui je go tūhngbohk (a classmate) géi bún syū 6 Kéuih séung mǎhn sūnsāng (the teacher) géi yeuhng yéh 7 Ngóh go pàhngyáuh gaau sǎihuhjái (children) Yīngmán ge 8 Jīngfó wóih faht gūngsi (the company) chún ge

Unit 17 Verbs and Particles

Exercise 17.1 1 dóu 2 dāi 3 fāan 4 gwo 5 dóu 6 yòhn 7 cho 8 hǎi 9 dóu 10 dóu

Exercise 17.2 1 Kéuih sēhngyaht tēng gújái 2 Ngóh tēng dóu yùhyihu 3 Kéuih yīhging lám dóu go daahp-on 4 Ngóh gin dóu go gwónggou 5 Léih gámgok dóu ngatlihk 6 Ngóh mǎhn dóu yīnmeih 7 Kéuih jūngyí tái sūsyut 8 Kéuih mǎh jūngyí tái héi

Exercise 17.3 1 Ngóh sǎu mǎh dóu kéuih fūng seun 2 Ngóh mǎaih mǎh dóu héi fēi 3 Ngóh tái mǎh dóu/gin mǎh dóu go páai 4 Ngóh mǎhn mǎh dóu dĩ sung 5 Ngóh teng mǎh dóu fēigēi seng 6 Ngóh lám mǎh dóu dím daap 7 Ngóh gei mǎh dóu gam do méng 8 Ngóh sihk mǎh dóu gam dō syutgōu 9 Ngóh wán mǎh dóu fūng seun 10 Ngóh pàhngyáuh heui mǎh dóu Sǎihh

Exercise 17.4 1 béi dāk dóu 2 gǎau dāk dihm 3 tái dāk dóu 4 jōnh dāk sēhng 5 seun dāk gwo 6 mǎaih dāk héi 7 jōuh dāk chit 8 tēng dāk mǎhng

Unit 18 Actions and events

Exercise 18.1 1 gin-gwo 2 sai-jó 3 sihk-jó 4 teng-gwo 5 heui-gwo
6 bou-jó-méng 7 yèhng-jó 8 háan-gwo 9 máaih-gwo 10 maaih-jó

Exercise 18.2 1 hán-gwo 2 fan-jó 3 si-gwo 4 yeuk-jó 5 sānching-jó
6 johng-gwo 7 chéutháan-jó 8 cheung-gwo 9 tái-jó 10 fāan-jó

Exercise 18.3 1 Dī hohksāang meih jáu 2 Ngóh go jái meih heui-gwo
Yinggwok 3 Kéuih meih ló chépsáih 4 Ngóhdeih meih jowh-gwo
jingfú gūng 5 Ngóh móuh dehng fóng 6 Go beisyū móuh fong ga
7 Ngóh meih yám-gwo Chingdóu bējáu 8 Ngóh móuh tūhng kéuih paak-
gwo-tō 9 Dihnfai móuh gū ga 10 Lóuhbáan móuh laauh-gwo kéuih

Exercise 18.4 1f Kéuih chūhnglòih meih si-gwo chih dou
2d Ngóhdeih yihchih heui-gwo léih úkkéi 3a/b Ngóh sinsāang
yihgíng/ngāam-ngāam fāan-jó séjhlàuh 4b/e Kéuih ngāam-
ngāam/jeuigahn sāang-jó go jái 5c/d/e Ngóh chàhnggíng/yihchih/h/
jeuigahn háauieuh-gwo chihjik 6a/b Gāan jáulàuh yihgíng/ngāam-
ngāam sāan-jó mǎhn

Unit 19 Activities: gán and jyuh

Exercise 19.1 1 Ngóh yihgā wuhn-gán sāam 2 Kéuihdeih kàhm-
máahn háidouh dá mǎhjeuk 3 Kéuih góng-gám dīhnwá 4 Yihgā
lohk-gán yúh 5 Dī sailouhjái háidouh wáan séui 6 Ngóhdeih hàahng-
gán làih 7 Kéuih yihgā chūng-gán-lèuhng 8 Ngóh go jái háidouh
waahk-wá 9 Lóuhbáan hoi-gán-wái 10 Kéuih juhng lau-gán ngóhdeih

Exercise 19.2 1 Ngóh jǎ-jyuh tūh sósìh 2 Kéuih máaih-gán sung
3 Ngóhdeih hóu gwa-jyuh léih 4 Léih jyú-gán mǎtyéh a? 5 Kéuih
yám-gán gafé 6 Dúngái léih mohng-jyuh ngóh a? 7 Dī sailoujái
chūng-gán-lèuhng 8 Hóu dó yàhn wán-gán gūng 9 Ngóh yihgā daap-
gán mahntàih 10 Kéuih sèhngyaht jeuk-jyuh dī gauh sāam

Exercise 19.3 1 Kéuih jeuk-jyuh sāam yàuh-séui He swims with his
clothes on 2 Kéuih fíng-jyuh dī hàhngléih jáu He left carrying the bag-
gage 3 Kéuih tái-jyuh dīhnsìh jowh gūngfo She does her homework while
watching television 4 Dúngái léih mǎh mohng-jyuh ngóh góng? Why
don't you look at me while talking? 5 Ngóh jūngyi tēng-jyuh yámngohk
yāusik I like to relax while listening to music 6 Kéuih sèhngyaht chí-jyuh
léih go léuih heui gāi He always goes around with your daughter 7 Go
mámìh póuh-jyuh go jái chéut gāi The mother goes out carrying her son

8 Dímgaai léih daai-jyuh ngáahn-géng fan-gaan a? Why do you sleep with your glasses on? 9 Ngóh lóuhgūng já-jyuh ga sán chēlāih jip ngóh My husband is driving his new car to meet me 10 Ngóh m̄h wúih jó-jyuh léih faat daaht I won't get in the way of your making money

Unit 20 Auxiliary verbs

Exercise 20.1 1 Ngóh yiu fāan ūkkéi 2 Kéuih sīk jā-chē 3 Ngóh wúih douh-hip 4 Ngóh pāhgyáuh wúih daai léih heui 5 Léih hóiyh daap fóchē heui 6 Ngóhdeih yinggōi jéunsīh dou 7 Léih hóiyh jóu jáu 8 Ngóh wúih wáahn syū 9 Kéuih sīk daap mahntāih 10 Kéuih yinggōi git-fān 11 Kéuih háng gām ga 12 Ngóhdeih háng tóhhip 13 Kéuihdeih m̄h háng dāng loih dī 14 Ngóh tsaitāi msái hoi-wú 15 Ngóhdeih msái dāamsām

Exercise 20.2 1 Ngóh m̄h sīk kéuih 2 Ngóh m̄h sīk heui gódouh 3 Ngóh msái fan-gaau 4 Kéuih m̄h yiu faahn 5 Kéuih m̄h wúih fāan ūkkéi 6 Léih m̄h hóiyh lāuh dūi 7 Léih m̄h hóiyh wuhn sām 8 Ngóhdeih m̄h yinggōi yāusik 9 Kéuih m̄h yinggōi máaih láu 10 Kéuih m̄h sīk tāahn kām

Exercise 20.3 1 Ngóh séung yeuk kéuih (chēt gāi) 2 Ngóh wúih tūngjī léih (ge la) 3 Deuijyuh, gām chí ngóh m̄h hóiyh bōng léih/ngóh bōng m̄h dóu léih 4 Ngóh msái sīk yéh 5 Léih yinggōi siusām dī jā-chē 6 Léih hóiyh chíh dī gāau gūngfo 7 Léideih m̄h yinggōi gam chōuloh 8 Ngóh m̄h háng bēi gam dō chíu 9 Ngóh m̄h sīk heui yāuh-guk 10 Ngóh pāhgyáuh m̄h wúih tūhngyi

Exercise 20.4 1 Ngóh gām-lín waahkjé wúih git-fān 2 Ngóh gām-lín hángdihng wúih git-fān 3 Kéuihdeih yātdihng hái ūkkéi 4 Kéuihdeih hótāhng hái ūkkéi 5 Ngóh yātdihng wúih sahpyih dūm jīchih fāan dou ūkkéi 6 Ngóh yātdihng yiu sahpyih dūm jīchih fāan dou ūkkéi 7 Fūng seun yātdihng yiu tīngyaht dou ge 8 Fūng seun yātdihng haih kāmyaht dou ge 9 Go leuhtsī yātdihng yiu hóu lēk 10 Go leuhtsī yātdihng hóu lēk

Exercise 20.5 1 Ngóh gām-máahn pūih dāk léih 2 Ngóhdeih m̄h yahp dāk henī/Ngóhdeih yahp m̄h dóu henī 3 Léih yihgā jáu dāk 4 Hohksaang m̄h góng dāk daaih wah 5 Sīk dāk la 6 Ngóh gāmyaht heui m̄h dóu/Ngóh gāmyaht m̄h heui dāk 7 Ngóh m̄h sīk dāk tihmbán/Ngóh sīk m̄h dóu tihmbán 8 Ngóh m̄h daap dāk léih/Ngóh daap m̄h dóu léih 9 Jéung gēipiu m̄h gōi dāk/Jéung gēipiu gōi m̄h dóu 10 Nīdouh m̄h teng dak Daaihlukh dīhtōih/Nīdouh teng m̄h dóu Daaihlukh dīhtōih

Unit 21 Passives

Exercise 21.1 1 Ngóhdeih béi ga che jó-jyuh 2 Kéuihdeih béi gíngchaat jūk-jó 3 Gāan fóng béi di sailonhjái gāu lyuhn-jó 4 Gó go daaih jéung héi ní go hohksaang yèhng-jó 5 Ngóh go sándóí béi kéuih je-jó 6 Ngóh béi di chē sēng chòuh sēng-jó 7 Gāan ūk béi kéuih go laahm-pàhngyáuh máaih-jó 8 Go dihnlóuh béi kéuihdeih jing waaih-jó 9 Dī chín héi ngóh yuhng-jó 10 Dī jyūgwúik béi kéuihdeih síhk-jó 11 Jek hūi béi kénih dá lauh-jó 12 Fūng seun béi ngóh tái-gwo 13 Go seunsēung béi kéuih hoi-gwo 14 Ga chē béi kénih jing-gán 15 Fūk wá béi kéuihdeih maaih-jó

Exercise 21.2 1 Ngóh go sáubiu béi yáhn ló-jó/Ngóh béi yáhn ló-jó go sáubiu 2 Douh mahn béi yáhn hoi-jó 3 Láahngheigēi béi yáhn sik-jó 4 Kéuih dī chín béi yáhn ngāak-jó/Kéuih héi yáhn ngāak-jó dī chín 5 Dī syū béi yáhn máaih-jó 6 Ngóh jek sáu béi yéh ngāauh dóu/Ngóh béi yéh ngāauh dóu jek sáu 7 Kéuih béi di yéh fāuh dóu 8 Kéuih ge sāmchihng héi dī yéh yinghéung dóu/Kéuih béi di yéh yinghéung dóu sāmchihng

Exercise 21.3 1 Nī gāan fóng dehng-jó (la) 2 Gāun ūk (juhng) héi-gán 3 Tou hei yinggōi tái 4 Bún syū chéutbaan-jó (la) 5 Gihn sām msái tong (la) 6 Léih go gaiwaahk (juhng) háaukwéih-gán 7 Ga chē yihm-gwo (la) 8 Fūk séung ying-jó (la) 9 Jāan dāng sik-jó (la) 10 Go sailonhjái sèhngyáht yin póuh

Unit 22 Word order and topicalization

Exercise 22.1 1 Gó bún syū ngóh máaih-jó 2 Syutgōu kéuih hóu jūngyl síhk 3 Wohnggok ngóh mīh sík heui 4 Nī tou hei ngóhdeih tái-gwo 5 Chuihjáuwá kéuih sík góng 6 Nī sáu gō léih téng-gwo meih a? 7 Sām baak mán léih yáuh-móuh a? 8 Hóiyèuhng Gūngyún kéuih heui-gwo 9 Siubóng ge yām-ngohk ngóh jeui jūngyi 10 Léih ge táifaat ngóh hóu tūhngyi

Exercise 22.2 1 A-May jauh meih 2 gó gihn jauh meih 3 Sāigung jauh móuh gam fongbiu 4 gó tou hóu dyún 5 dihnying jauh hóu síu tái 6 kéuih saikóu ngóh jauh mīh sík 7 Méihgwok jauh juhng meih 8 kéuih ge ngóh jauh mīh jipsauh 9 móhngkàuh ngóh jauh meih hohk-gwo 10 gúdin yāmngohk ngóh jauh móuh gam jūngyi

Exercise 22.3 1 Faai chāan ngóh mīh séung sèhngyáht síhk (I don't want to eat it that often) 2 Syūga ngóhdeih heui-jó léuihhahng (We went on

hohday) 3 Sailouhjái sāang léuhng go jauh gau la (To have two is enough) 4 Gam dô yeuhng dímsham móuh yát yeuhng hóu-síhk (Not one dish was good) 5 Sántàih dihnwá gachíuh yuht làih yuht pèhng (The prices get cheaper and cheaper) 6 Sám tìuh tái jei leng nī tìuh (This one looks best) 7 Yahtmán ngóh géi séung hohk (I'd quite like to learn it) 8 Páuché ngóh máaih mī héi (I can't afford one) 9 Jǐnggwok yāmgohk ngóh mīh sūhk (I'm not familiar with it) 10 Gít-fān jei gányín mhóu gam jóu (The most important thing is not to do it too soon)

Unit 23 Yes/no questions

Exercise 23.1 1 Ngóhdeih tīngyaht heui-mh-heui hàahng-sāan a? 2 Hēunggóng yihgā yíht-mh-yíht a? 3 Kéuih gūngsī yáuh-móuh mahn-tàih a? 4 A-John fāan-jó làih meih a? 5 Léih sái-mái làuh háidoh a? 6 Kéuihdeih bün-jó ùk meih a? 7 Tsāngwok léibdeih heui-gwo meih a? 8 Gāmyaht haih-mhah gākèih lèihga? 9 Kéuih haih-mhah gáu yuht chéutsai ga? 10 Léih ùkkéi yúhn-mh-yáhn a?

Exercise 23.2 1 Léibdeih wúih-mh-wúih yíhmāhn a? 2 Tīngyaht sái-mh-sái fāan-gūng a? 3 Léih sīk-mh-sīk jā-ché a? 4 Ngóhdeih hó-mh-hóyíh chíh dī jūn a? 5 Léih wúih-mh-wúih bōng ngóhdeih a? 6 Léih wúih-mh-wúih pūih léih ùkkéi-yáhn a? 7 Kéuih sái-mh-sái je chín gāu jóu a? 8 Kéuihdeih yīng-mh-yīnggōi jóu dī gít-fān lē? 9 Léih wúih-mh-wúih hīngjāk sāangyaht a? 10 Ngóh yīng-mh-yīnggōi gám yéung jōuh a?

Exercise 23.3 1 yáuh a/móuh a 2 yáuh a/móuh a 3 haih a/mhah a 4 Haih a/mhah a 5 wúih a/mh wúih a 6 háau-jó la/meih a 7 heui-gwo la/meih a 8 fan-jó la/meih a 9 gau yúhn la/meih a 10 jōhng-gwo la/meih a

Unit 24 Wh-questions

Exercise 24.1 1a Bīngó hái heiyún dāng ngóhdeih a? 1b Ngóh pāh-nyáuh hái bīndouh dāng ngóhdeih a? 2a Kéuihdeih tīngyaht heui bīndouh a? 2b Kéuihdeih géisih heui Dòlèuhndō a? 3a Gām máahn yáuh mátyéh síhk a? 3b Gétisih yáhn yú síhk a? 4a Ngóh duap bási heui bīndouh a? 4b Ngóh dímyéung heui hohkhaah a? 5a Kéuih waih-jó bīngó yíhmāhn a? 5b Kéuih dímgái yíhmāhn a? 6a Léih jyuh-jó (hái) bīndouh sah p lūn a? 6b Léih jyuh-jó (hái) Méihgwok géi loih a?

Exercise 24.2 1 Léih sikh-gán mät'yéh a? 2 Léih géishān fān làih a? 3 Féigēi géi dím héifēi a? 4 Léih jyuh hái bīndouh a? 5 Dīngáai móuh yàhn hái'douh a? 6 Léih géi dō'seui a? 7 Dīngáai léih chih dou a?/Léih dīngáai chihdou a? 8 Tòuhsyū-gwón géi dím sān mūhn a? 9 Bīndouh hóyh máaih fóchē fēi a? 10 Dīngáai douh mūhn sān-jó a/gé?

Exercise 24.3 1 Chéng mahn dím heui Gáulūhngtòhng deih'tit jaahm a? 2 Chéng mahn dím heui Chek Lahp Gok Gēichēuhng a? 3 Chéng mahn sáisáugāan/chísó hái bīndouh a? 4 Chéng mahn dím heui déng lāu a? 5 Chéng mahn dím heui yàuhjīnggúk a? 6 Chéng mahn nī gāan jáudim ge chāantēng hái bīndouh a? 7 Chéng mahn bīn ga bāsī heui Tīnsīng Máhtāuh a? 8 Chéng mahn bīn ga syūhn heui Yūhgīng-wāan a? 9 Chéng mahn jeui kóhn ge chūnkāp-sīhchēuhng hái bīndouh a? 10 Chéng mahn síubá jaahm hái bīndouh a?

Unit 25 Sentence Particles

Exercise 25.1 1 la (ge la) 2 ga (ge) 3 jē 4 ge 5 la 6 là 7 la (ge la) 8 lèihga 9 là 10 jē

Exercise 25.2 1 a 2 lèihga 3 ga 4 mē 5 a 6 a 7 mē 8 ga (ge)

Exercise 25.3 1b 2c 3a 4f 5e 6d 7h 8i 9g

Unit 26 Imperatives

Exercise 26.1 1 Léih sé-seun bēi ngóh là (ā) 2 Léih faai dī fān ūkkéi là (ā) 3 Maahn-máam hàuhng (là) ā 4 Siusām gwo máhlouh là 5 Jīkhāak bēi chín là 6 Yám dō dī séui là 7 Jóu dī fong gūng là (ā) 8 Tāuh ngóh yāt piú là (ā) 9 Dáng ngóh yāt jahn ā (là) 10 Lám chingchó dī là (ā)

Exercise 26.2 1 (Léih) mhóu hōi chēung là or Máih hōi chēung là 2 Léih mhóu góng lohk heui là 3 (Léih) mhóu maaih(-jó) gāan ūk là 4 (Léih) mhóu sikh yeuhk là 5 (Léih) mhóu góí tsihmuhk là 6 Léihdeih mhóu gaijuhk góng là 7 Ngóhdeih mhóu heui là 8 Léihdeih mhóu gam faai kyutdihng là 9 Léih bātyùh mhóu jyau gūng là 10 Ngóhdeih bātyùh mhóu bān ūk là

Exercise 26.3 1 Léih bōng ngóh máaih sung ā (là) 2 Léih bōng ngóh gei seun ā (là) 3 Mgoi léih bong ngóhdeih ying séung ā 4 Léih bōng

kéuih gahm jūng lā (ā) 5 Léih bōng kéuihdeih gāau hohkfai lā (ā)
 6 Léih bōng ngóhdeih jūng che a 7 Léih bōng kéuih jōuh daahn-gōu ā
 (lā) 8 Léih bōng ngóhdeih jyú-faahn lā (ā) 9 Léih bōng ngóh dehng
 gēipiu ā (lā) 10 Léih bōng kéuih wán gūng lā (ā)

Exercise 26.4 1 Léih loh-kwām dī lā 2 Mhóu gam haakhei la!
 3 Léih kahnlihk dī lā! 4 Léih mhóu gam tām-sām lā 5 Mgoi léih
 simahn dī lā! 6 Léih mhóu gam gu-ngouh 7 Mgoi léih góng (dāk)
 daaih sēng dī lā 8 Mhóu haahng (dāk) gam faai lā! 9 Mhóu jeuk dāk
 gam chéuihbin lā 10 Léih mhóu gam ngaahng-géng lā!

Unit 27 Requests and thanks

Exercise 27.1 1 Mgoi héi jēung chānpái ngóh ā/Béi jēung chānpái
 ngóh ā, mgoi 2 Mgoi góng maahn dī ā 3 Mgoi joi góng yāt chí ā
 4 Mgoi sé faai dī ā 5 Mgoi léih mhóu hoi láahnghei ā 6 Sān màaih
 dōuh mūn ā, mgoi 7 Giu dī hohksāng lèih ā, mgoi 8 Giu gíngchaat
 ā, mgoi 9 Mgoi léih mhóu sāi chin lā 10 Mgoi héi jēung daan ngóh
 ā/Māaih daan ā, mgoi

Exercise 27.2 1 Chéng (léih) làuh dāi háu seun ā/lā 2 Chéng (léih)
 galjuhk góng loh-k heui ā/lā 3 Chéng (léih) dāng ngóh yāt jahn ā/lā
 4 Chéng (léih) tūngī ngóhdeih jéui sán síusik ā/lā 5 Chéng (léih) séuhng
 tòih líhng jéung ā/lā 6 Chéng (léih) làuhsām tēng syū lā 7 Chéng (léih)
 gān-jyuh ngóh hàahng ā/lā 8 Chéng (léihdeih) gwo làih nībihn choh
 ā/lā 9 Chéng (léih) béi jēung gēipiu ngóh tái ā 10 Chéng (léih) sé dāi
 léih ge deihjī tūhng dīhawá houhmáh ā/lā

Exercise 27.3 1 mgoi 2 dōjeh 3 dōjeh 4 mgoi 5 dōjeh 6 mgoi
 7 mgoi 8 dōjeh 9 mgoi 10 dōjeh

Exercise 27.4 (deui-mjyuh is always acceptable) 1 deui-mjyuh
 2 mhóuyisi 3 mhóuyisi 4 deui-mjyuh 5 mhóuyisi/mgoi je-gwo 6 deui-
 mjyuh 7 mhóuyisi 8 deui-mjyuh 9 mhóuyisi 10 deui-mjyuh

Unit 28 Numbers, dates and times

Exercise 28.1 1 sāamsahp-sei 2 chātsahp-gáu 3 yātbaak-líhng-
 luhk 4 yihbaak-sāamsahp-sei 5 baat baak yātsahp-baat 6 yūchun
 yihbaak (chín-yih) 7 yāt maahn-yihchūn (maahn-yih) 8 yih maahn sei
 chín saam baak líhng-yih 9 sei maahn sām chín ngh baak seisahp-
 ngh 10 sāamsahp-yāt maahn ngh chín

Exercise 28.2 1 yāt yuht yāt houh 2 sahpyih yuht sahpyih houh
 3 ngh yuht yihshap-yāt houh 4 baat yuht gáu houh 5 sahpsāam houh
 sīngkèih ngh 6 yāt gáu luhk sām līn chāt yuht sei houh 7 yāt gáu
 gáu chāt līn luhk yuht sāamsahp houh 8 yāt gáu gáu gáu līn sahpyih
 yuht sāamsahp-yāt houh 9 yihlīnghlīnghlīngh līn yih yuht yihshap-gáu
 houh 10 yih līngh līngh baat līn gáu yuht sahpegh houh

Exercise 28.3 1h 2f 3i 4g 5j 6e 7b 8a 9d 10c

Exercise 28.4 1 Gāmyaht haīh yātgaugaugáu līm sahpyuht sahpy
 houh 2 Ngóh ge sāangyaht haīh sahpy yuht sāamsahp-yāt houh 3 Ngóh
 ge chēutsāng yahtkèih haīh yāt gáu luhk yih līn gáu yuht sām houh
 4 Ngóh ūkkéi dihnwá haīh yih lohk līngh gáu chāt līngh yāt gáu/Ngóh
 gūngsī dihnwá haīh yih baat ngh gáu yih chāt yih yih 5 Ngóh ge deihi
 haīh Gáulūngh Sīngh Lyùnhahp Douh yāt baak houh sām láu C joh

GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

adjective a class of words used to describe nouns.

adverb a class of words used to describe verbs or to modify sentences.

antonym a word having the opposite meaning to another, e.g. *unclear* as opposed to *clear*.

aspect a grammatical distinction involving whether an event is seen as complete (as in the Cantonese perfective form **-j6**) or ongoing, as in the English progressive form *-ing* and Cantonese **-gán**.

auxiliary a class of words used together with a verb and carrying a grammatical function, e.g. **will** (will).

classifier a class of words used to 'classify' nouns by shared features such as shape or function, e.g. **tiuh** for elongated objects as in **tiuh yú** (fish).

demonstrative words indicating proximity (this) or distance (that).

digraph a combination of letters representing a single sound, e.g. **ng**, **eu**.

diphthong a combination of two vowel sounds, e.g. **au** as in **sau** (thin).

experiential a form of the verb denoting experience, or something which has happened at least once (expressed by **gwo** in Cantonese).

hanging topic an instance of topicalization in which the topic is not subject or object of the verb, but bears a loose relation to the subject or object.

localizer a class of words used after a noun to specify location, e.g. **yahp-bihun** (inside).

measure similar to classifier; more precisely, those classifiers which denote a measured quantity, e.g. **yāt dā gāidáan** 'a dozen eggs'.

minimal pair a pair of words or sentences differing in only one feature.

modal having to do with possibility and necessity, as opposed to fact

modality the field of meaning involving possibility and necessity.

negation forms used to deny the truth of a statement.

particle a word which does not belong to any of the major word classes but plays a grammatical or communicative role. **Verb particles**, such as **dóu** indicating completion of an action, appear after the verb, while

sentence particles, like **a** added to questions for politeness, come at the end of the sentence.

passive a type of sentence which shows action being done to the subject.

perfective a form of the verb denoting an event viewed as complete (expressed by the suffix **-jó** in Cantonese).

predicate the part of the sentence which says something about the subject, typically a verb or adjective.

preposition a word which precedes a noun (more precisely a noun phrase), indicating a spatial or other relationship to it.

pronoun a word which substitutes for a noun (more precisely a noun phrase, i.e. the noun and any modifiers which go with it).

topicalization the process by which some constituent is placed first in the sentence, so that the sentence appears to be 'about' that constituent, e.g. **ga chē ngóh juhng meih maaíh** (The car I haven't sold yet).

transitive verb a verb that can or must take a noun as its object, e.g. **hit**.

INDEX

- ɲ** particle 131, 135
- ɲ** particle 121, 123, 127, 130, 132
- ɲ-** prefix 14
- addresses 149
- adjectives 32, 42–44
 - attributive 42–43
 - comparison of 58–61
 - modification of 43
 - negative 74
 - predicative 43
 - reduplicated 14, 43–44
 - with **yáuh/móuh** 29–30
- adverbs
 - comparison of 61
 - of frequency/duration 53–55
 - of manner 47–49
 - of time 52–53
 - reduplicated 48–50
- affricates 2
- antonyms 74
- apologies 142
- aspect markers 55, 79–80
 - progressive, continuous 99–102
 - perfective, experiential 93–96
- aspiration 1
- auxiliary verbs 104–107, 112
 - yáuh** 29
- bátyùh** rather 137
- béi** give, let 83–85
- béi** comparative 59–61
- béi** passive 110–112
- bín** which 127
- bông** help 136, 141
- chéng** please 140
- chéut** (go out) 78–80, 88
- classifiers 36–40
 - in possessive construction 24, 39
- collectives 37
- comparison 58–61
 - of adverbs 61
- completion 96, 122
- consonants 1–4
- containers 37
- dái** down 88
- dák** manner 47–48, 61
- dák** potential 90–91
- dates 147–148
- definiteness 40
- déi** suffix 14, 43–44, 48–49
- deih** suffix 17–18
- demonstratives 39, 65
- deui-mjyuh** sorry 142
- dí**
 - comparative 58–59, 61, 136
 - plural 24, 38
- diphthongs 8–9
- direction 68, 78–80
- dójeih** thank you 140–141
- dóu** 89–90
- dou** to, arrive 68, 89
- emphasis 33–34
- existence 27–28
- fān** (go) back 78–80, 88–89
- future 105
- gau** teach 84–85
- gám** thus 48
- gam** so 43
- gán** progressive 99–102

ge attributive 62
 particle 33–34, 131–132
 possessive 23–24, 39
gél quite 43, 44, 47
gél how (many) 127
gín see 90
gūg via 65, 69
gwo comparative 58–61
gwo (go) over 78–80, 88
gwo experiential 94–95, 122

hái at 33, 65–67
haih be 23, 32–34, 43, 62, 106
háidauh progressive 99–100
hél up 88–89
heui go 78–80
heung towards 65, 68
hóí away 88
hóu very 43, 44, 47, 74
hóyh can 104, 106–107

imperatives 131, 135–137
 inference 106
 interrogatives 120–128
 intonation 13

jauh then 116
jê particle 131
je lend/borrow 85
jeui, ji most 61–62
jihgêi oneself 20–21
jó perfective 93–95, 122
juhng even 59
jyuh continuous 100–102

kéuih he/she 17–21

lā particle 131, 135
la particle 122, 131
lāih come 78–80
lāih from 65, 69
lèihga 32
léih you 17–21, 135
 localizers, location 65–68
lohk go down 78–80

m- negative prefix 72, 74
māaih closer 88
māhn smell 90
mahn ask 84–85
māih don't 137
 Mandarin x-xii, 60
mê particle 130

measures 36
meih not yet 72–73, 96
 in questions 95–96, 122–123
mgô please/thank you 135,
 140–141
m̃h not 72, 122
 potential 90–91
m̃hūih not be 71–73, 75
m̃hóu don't 136–137
m̃hóuyisí sorry 142
 modality, modals 104–107
móuh 27–29, 96
 motion, movement 68, 78–80
msái 105

nasals 3–4
 necessity 104–106
 negation 72–75
 with **jé** and **gwo** 96
 negatives, double 75
ngóh I 17–21
 numbers 145–147

obligation 106

permission 84
 particles
 directional 88–89
 resultative 89
 sentence 130–132
 passive 110–112, 116–117
 perfective 93–95
 plural 24
 politeness 121, 127, 140–142
 possession 23–24, 27–28, 39
 possibility 104–107
 potential 90
 prefixes 14, 72, 74
 prepositions 65–69
 progressive 99–102
 prohibitions 136–137
 pronouns 17–20
 pronunciation xii

questions
 yes/no 120–123
 wh-questions 125–128

reduplication 13, 43–44, 48–49
 reflexives 20–21
 repetition
 of transitive verb 47–48, 55
 requests 131

-
- romanization xi
 - in place names, surnames 3
 - semivowels 3
 - séung** want 104
 - séuhng** go up 78–80
 - sik** know 104
 - stress 13
 - suffixes 17–18
 - superlatives 61–62
 - tsai** too 43, 74
 - təng** listen/hear 90–91
 - time 52–55
 - of day 148
 - tones 11–14
 - changed 13–14, 43, 49
 - topic, topicalization 111–112, 115–118
 - verbs
 - directional 78–80
 - of giving 83–85
 - of perception 90
 - vowels 7–9
 - wán** seek/find 90
 - wáih** will/would 104–106
 - Yale system xii
 - yáhp** (go) in 78–80, 88
 - yáuh** have, there is 27–29
 - yáuh** from 65, 58
 - yiú** want/need 104–105